

PUBLICA

Swedish Government and Politics

Olof Petersson

Postscript on the EU-Referendum

Swedes voted in favour of membership of the European Union at the referendum held on 13 November 1994.

The following text was printed on the ballot paper: "The Riksdag has decided to hold a referendum on Swedish membership of the European Union (EU). The subject of the referendum is whether Sweden should become a member of the EU in accordance with the terms of the agreement that has been negotiated between Sweden and the member states of the EU. Is it your view that Sweden should become a member of the EU in accordance with the agreement reached between Sweden and the member states of the EU?" Voters could cast one of three ballots: yes, no or one printed with the words "blank ballot".

According to the preliminary results 52.2 per cent voted yes, 46.9 per cent voted no and 0.9 per cent cast blank votes. The turnout was 82.4 per cent. The rules for the franchise were the same as for elections to the Riksdag, i.e. only Swedish citizens were entitled to vote. In formal terms the referendum was purely consultative, but all the parties had declared in advance that they would abide by the result.

A large majority of the Riksdag are in favour of Swedish membership. The official policy of the Social Democrats, the Moderate Party, the Centre Party, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats was to recommend a yes vote. Only the Left Party and the Greens were opposed to membership. Opinion surveys show that a large majority of Moderate and Liberal voters support the "yes" policy of their parties. Left Party and Green sympathisers are almost all opposed. The remaining parties, however, are strongly split on the issue within party ranks. Approximately half of the voters supporting the Social Democrats, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats are opposed to membership of the EU. The trade union peak organisations LO and TCO decided not to adopt an official position.

According to an exit poll, the most important reasons cited by supporters of the yes vote were economics, peace in Europe, employment and access to EU institutions. Opponents were most worried that the EU posed a threat to democracy, national self-determination, narcotics policy, the quality of food and social security.

In northern Sweden and the sparsely populated counties a majority voted against membership. The proportion of opponents was compara-

tively high among the low paid, the less educated, young people and women. In the major towns and cities and in southern Sweden a majority voted in favour. The proportion of EU-supporters is greatest among the self-employed, professionals, older citizens and men. The issue of Swedish membership of the EU has exposed a gulf between the centre and the periphery.

After the referendum Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson took pains to bridge the gulf between supporters and opponents, especially within the Social Democratic Party. He pointed out that he had appointed two well-known opponents of Swedish membership to his Cabinet.

With the referendum over it is the Riksdag which will take the decisions necessary for Sweden to accede to the European Union on 1 January 1995. The Instrument of Government will be altered to allow the Riksdag to delegate decision-making power to the European Communities as long as they afford the same degree of protection of human rights and freedoms as laid down in the Instrument of Government and the European Convention on Human Rights. In addition the Riksdag will pass a special Act of Accession. The effect of this will be that the laws, agreements and other decisions of the European Communities will apply in Sweden. The Act will also stipulate that the Government must consult with the Riksdag and keep it informed on the conduct of negotiations in the Council of Ministers. The Riksdag will appoint an Advisory Council on European Union Affairs to replace the EU-Delegation.

As a member of the European Union, Sweden will have one seat on the Commission, four votes in the Council of Ministers and 22 seats in the European Parliament. The Riksdag will appoint representatives to sit in the European Parliament during a transitional period until general elections to the European Parliament are held by 1996 at the latest.

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Translated by Frank Gabriel Perry

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I A Welfare State under Threat

On 19 November 1992 the director of the Bank of Sweden announced that the Bank was no longer able to defend the fixed exchange rate. The decision to allow the *krona* to float was conclusive evidence of the imbalances in the Swedish economy. During the preceding two decades the signs that there were fundamental problems in the Swedish economy had been growing more obvious and were also appearing more frequently. These problems had first become manifest in high inflation and low growth but it was unemployment that subsequently became the major cause for concern. A country that could still pride itself on full employment at the end of the 1980s found itself just a few years later facing an unemployment rate of eight per cent with an additional five per cent of the labour force involved in employment creation measures. In recent decades government policy had been marked by a series of devaluations, rising public expenditure, an increasing tax burden and the poor state of public finances. Sweden with its enormous and rapidly rising national debt had become one of the most potent cautionary examples among the OECD-countries.

It was in this situation that the Government appointed a commission of independent academics to analyse economic policy and to propose guidelines for its development in the medium term. The commission was made up of five economists and the political scientist who is the author of this book. The group was chaired by Professor Assar Lindbeck of the University of Stockholm. In the report it delivered in March 1993 the commission found that the Swedish crisis was the product of a complex mix of both acute and chronic problems. This makes it impossible to solve the crisis solely by means of short-term measures. The commission

attempted to identify the fundamental weaknesses in the workings of the Swedish economic system and to propose ways of improving them, particularly in relation to the regulatory systems and those institutions which are determined politically. The aim was to make recommendations which would lead to greater economic stability, efficiency and growth – while respecting generally accepted goals for economic security and taking redistributive policies into account. The commission also recommended making improvements to the workings of the political system so as to increase its capacity to create a set of stable rules and institutions for the improvement of the economic environment both for industrial companies and domestic households.

Despite its harsh criticism of the shortcomings of the economic and political systems, the commission also pointed to the favourable aspects of the organisation of Swedish society. In global terms Sweden is still a rich and thriving country. The country's democratic system of government is firmly entrenched and its inhabitants have previously been able to combine hard-headed practicality with a sense of common purpose in working towards future goals.

Sweden is currently going through the most serious crisis it has faced since the 1930s. The methods the country adopts to solve this crisis may determine the shape of Swedish society for decades to come. The exact nature of the solution remains unclear. The issue is to what extent the institutions of Swedish society will be able to reform themselves.

A Combination of Causes

The Swedish crisis should be seen against a background of three factors: one of these is long-term and related to the global changes in the economic structure, another is medium-term and has to do with changes to the system of political decision-making and a third is short-term and relates to the recession of the early 1990s.

None of these factors is unique to Sweden but for particular historical reasons each of them has had a special impact on the country. What is more the changes being brought about by these three factors overlap one another. Previously Sweden had managed both to buffer and postpone many of the adaptations it had to make. This is why Sweden finds itself

in the unenviable position in which the full impact of all three crises is being felt at one and the same time.

Changes in the Long Term

One hundred years ago Sweden was transformed from an agricultural to an industrial society. Today we are witnessing the transition from an industrial to an internationalised information society.

Just as established customs, ways of thinking and institutions were challenged at the turn of the last century, today we are realising that the body of ideas that not so long ago was seen as self-evident is suddenly being challenged and reduced, at best, to one possible alternative among many others.

It is obviously important not to be misled by a schematic division into historical stages. The transition from an agrarian society did not mean that all agriculture simply ceased and that people stopped eating food. It is simply the case that changes to the methods of consumption meant that it was no longer necessary for four fifths of the population to toil in the fields when the efforts of two to three per cent could cater for the needs of the nation. Nor does the fact that the industrial society is coming to an end mean that industrial production will cease. However, the number of industrial employees as a proportion of the labour force had already reached its peak at the beginning of the 1960s. Workers in agriculture and in industry are a small and declining minority.

The transition from an industrial to a post-industrial order is closely linked to the micro-electronic revolution which has compressed space in the social, economic and political spheres. The relations of mutual dependence between people and events have become much more extensive. The arrival of new kinds of issue, such as environmental pollution, terrorism, the drug trade, currency crises and AIDS, has been the consequence either of new technology or of the increased interdependence of the whole world. Neo-political issues of this kind differ from the traditional concerns of politics in that they are transnational rather than national or local in character.

The capacity of the nation state to find satisfactory solutions to many of the major issues of the present is diminishing both because the scale of the problems transcends national boundaries, and because long-standing issues are acquiring ever greater international ramifications and also

because the public today is no longer as willing simply to accept decisions made centrally and handed down from above.

The impact of all this has been particularly noticeable in Sweden. In other European countries the process of integration has taken place over a considerable length of time while in Sweden the necessary adjustments are having to be made in a relatively short period. Sweden has been a centralised, homogeneous unitary state – a form of society which finds it relatively difficult to accommodate a more complex conflict structure. The Swedish model of society has been particularly closely linked with the industrial society and its class structure and power relationships.

Changes in the Medium Term

Politicians have been society's heroes for the last fifty years or so. The continuous expansion of the public sector was an indication of how an ever increasing proportion of the resources available to society was being made subject to collective decisions. The public put its faith in the ability of politicians to solve its problems; the politicians employed more and more civil servants to serve the public. The system was dependent on a continually rising economic surplus which could be redistributed on the basis of political decisions.

The high point of the Swedish welfare state was reached in the course of a few post-war decades that saw uniquely high rates of growth. Since Sweden had not been drawn into the Second World War, its industry remained intact when the war was over and the country was rapidly able to supply a Europe in the process of reconstruction with metal ores, iron, wood and paper. This period came to end around 1970. The preceding decades had been notable for consistently high rates of growth which began to decline after 1970. The productivity of the Swedish economy fell back both in comparison to the preceding decades and in comparison to the average rates for the OECD-countries.

The problem was that Swedish society as a whole could not adapt to the changed economic conditions. Wage levels and the growth in public expenditure continued to rise as though nothing had happened to the rate of growth of the economy.

Attempts to make the public sector more efficient were far from satisfactory. Those parts of the public sector which were of major

importance in economic terms, such as the social transfer system and, in particular, the pension system, were not adjusted.

Moreover the very size of the public sector caused problems of its own. The difficulties faced by politicians in attempting to monitor and control a massive bureaucracy were all too apparent. During the 1980s the reputation of politicians in general was tainted by a number of scandals which the increasingly independent mass media brought to light. The public felt that their rising expectations were not being met rapidly enough and their dissatisfaction grew. This frustration was expressed by some Swedes in the form of xenophobia and a lack of tolerance. Democratic government in Sweden found itself facing a problem of legitimacy.

Short-term Problems

When the jubilation of the yuppie-years came to an end with the close of the 1980s, Sweden went into the economic recession along with the rest of the Western world but it felt the impact with special force. In a very short period all the air had blown out of the economic balloon. The level of investment fell. Work in the construction industry virtually came to a halt with large-scale unemployment as a result. The financial crisis meant that almost all of Sweden's commercial banks were forced to seek help from the government in order to survive. Domestic demand fell and this made the downturn even worse. From 1991 the gross domestic product declined for three years in a row. Once the fixed exchange rate had been abandoned, the Swedish *krona* depreciated by 20 per cent over twelve months. The fall in demand meant that approximately one sixth of the labour force had no regular employment. The budget deficit rose to ca. 13 per cent of GDP. The risk of higher interest rates and higher inflation in the long term is bound to increase when the state becomes a major borrower.

The acute financial crisis has left the Government facing a more difficult situation than ever before. The traditional means of achieving full employment – employing more people in the public sector – is no longer an option. Any attempt to solve the short-term problems of unemployment risks undermining the long-term reconstruction of the public finances which is one of the measures that has to be taken if the balance of the Swedish economy is to be restored.

There is clearly no longer any single way out of the crisis. All the alternative courses of action available in economic policy have disadvantages of their own. Decisions have to be made on the outcome of a very careful balancing of the short and long-term considerations and this means that the political decision-making process is confronted with a task of enormous difficulty.

Swedish Politics and Government

The aim of this book is to provide an overview of the Swedish political system and so contribute to an understanding of the ways in which a developed welfare state can deal with the problems it faces. What it will show is that parts of the Swedish experience are unique and certain implications are probably impossible to apply to other countries. But it is precisely because Sweden is such an extreme case in certain respects, and indeed in a number of contexts it has figured as the very prototype of a welfare state, that the lessons to be drawn from Swedish experience may be of general interest. The Swedish experiment can usefully be studied by all those who are interested in the difficult journey to discover a form of society that can combine equality with efficiency, that is intended to create a welfare society for all its citizens and at the same time to be dynamic and open to innovation and change.

The aforesaid has already made clear that the crisis facing us today cannot be understood without reference to the historical background. Chapter Two provides a brief survey of the changes in Swedish social organisation over the centuries and makes clear precisely which aspects of contemporary society are part of the historical inheritance. Chapter Three raises the issue of whether a particular "Swedish Model" really exists and arrives at the answer that there is no single Swedish Model but in fact a variety of them. Chapter Four considers the major changes that have taken place on the international scene and which have had a decisive effect on the nature of Swedish politics.

Chapter Five introduces a discussion on the changes currently taking place in the organisation of Swedish society. In the eleven chapters that follow, and which form the main part of this book, each of the most important institutions in Swedish society is described. The emphasis is

on the political institutions, but other centres of power are also considered. In these chapters, too, current problems are put in a historical context.

Three chapters form the conclusion to the book. Chapter Seventeen provides a summary view of the Swedish power structure and the changes occurring within it. Chapter Eighteen attempts to discover what the consequences of the current changes will be for Swedish citizens. Chapter Nineteen summarizes the lessons of Swedish experience and in so doing draws up some conceivable perspectives for the future. At the end of the book there are several tables with a basic digest of information on Swedish politics.

2 The Formation of a Polity

Even though the main characteristics of the Swedish system of government differ little from the general European pattern, the polity exhibits a number of features which distinguish it from those of other countries. The Swedish political institutions of today have historical roots, some of which can be traced back in time for several hundred years.

The Middle Ages: Local Self-Government

Any attempt to apply current concepts to the governmental systems of previous eras can easily become anachronistic. The conceptual universe of the Middle Ages lacked terms such as democracy, the state, parliamentary government, human rights and the separation of powers. And yet the power structures of that period exhibit numerous characteristics which seem both familiar and comprehensible.

One vital difference in relation to modern conditions is that government in the Middle Ages lacked the fixed territorial basis we know today; national borders were more fluid. It was not until several hundred years later that the country's boundaries would be more firmly established. Geographic obstacles meant that it was particularly difficult to keep Sweden united as single realm. The extensive and thinly populated territory was hard to control. The developing power of the monarchy had to compete with various bodies: local assemblies such as the Things (*ting*), hundreds and parish councils, as well as with the diets

of the nobility. As a result of increased trade the towns became major centres of power. In Northern Europe the trading links set up by the Hanseatic League developed into a supra-national network of enormous power.

In the late Middle Ages, four principal poles of force emerged to contend for power: the monarchy, the nobility, the church and the peasantry. Although the foundations of royal power were becoming increasingly stable, the king was not an absolute monarch. The Royal Charter of the Land Law, which can be considered the country's first constitution, contained detailed provisions on the separation of powers. The support of the magnates was vital to the status of the sovereign. The allegiance of the nobility was purchased with fiefdoms and noble privileges of various kinds. After the monarch, it was the Council or *curia regia* that exercised increasing power over the government of the country.

The significance of the church in government was a dual one. Firstly, the Catholic church was a major power in its own right; it controlled vast lands. Bishops and priests enjoyed special privileges. The Catholic church also served as an organisational model for the temporal powers. From Rome there spread out a densely interconnected network of bishoprics, parishes and monasteries in all directions. Both directly and indirectly the dioceses, papal bulls, synods and canon law were all to exercise a powerful influence on the governmental systems of later ages.

The co-existence of royal power with that of the magnates and the church was hardly unique. What made Sweden different from most other countries was the relative strength of the peasantry. Although the ancient tradition of local self-rule faced increasing competition from the claims of feudal lords and central government, it never suffered as thorough a suppression as in countries more affected by feudalism. All free men were allowed to participate in the Thing; only women and thralls were excluded from this form of local assembly. Although the notion of the independent peasant, known in Sweden as the free farmer, would subsequently become mythologised, it contains an important kernel of truth nonetheless. Various forms of local self-determination remained in existence alongside a strong central power. The common people also took part in the election of the king and had a say in taxation. The proclamation made at Mora field outside Uppsala in 1319 is considered to be Sweden's first constitutional statute. This royal charter is in the form of a contract between the sovereign and the

people. The king undertook not to interfere with the freedoms of the church and the nobility and not to lay unjust burdens on the people. The assent of the commons was necessary for decisions on taxation.

Popular influence over the government of the country could not, of course, compare with the power enjoyed by the nobility and the clergy. And yet the indirect role played by the free farmers was far from insignificant. The thickly forested and inaccessible nature of the terrain gave the peasants a considerable advantage. The king's sheriffs and the deputies of the nobles could only exert temporary and incomplete control over their territory. As a last resort farmers could escape unwelcome impositions by moving on and breaking new ground in the depth of the forests. The country could hardly have been governed at all without some form of accommodation with the peasantry.

Historians have long argued over the date of the establishment of the Riksdag, the Swedish parliament. For many years the Arboga Assembly of 1435 was considered to be its birthplace. However, the term "Riksdag" does not appear until the sixteenth century along with the notion of "stånd" (Estate), both under the influence of the German language. Although a series of diets and assemblies of the nobility, which were composed in different ways and with varying responsibilities, were held during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was not until the middle of the sixteenth century that the Riksdag of the Estates evolved into the national parliament it would constitute for the next three hundred years. The national assemblies held by Gustav Vasa at Västerås in 1527 and 1544 were important steps towards a fully-fledged Parliament of the Estates which would represent all parts of the realm and all the free social groups, and which would give all the Estates an independent power of decision-making while exercising what was comparatively permanent and effective power over the government of the country.

The feature that distinguished the Swedish Parliament of the Estates in European terms was that the free farmers were represented in a parliamentary estate of their own.

Sweden's Period as a Great Power: the Rule of the State

It was during the seventeenth century that Sweden's territorial conquests in Europe made her a Great Power; this period was to have far-reaching consequences for the internal government of the country. Within a short space of time a peripheral and underdeveloped province was transformed into a well-organised and expanding nation. The main body of the apparatus of the Swedish state derives from this period.

The restructuring of the polity was impelled not least by the contingencies of wartime. The scale of Sweden's military commitments required enormous investment in the form of both money and manpower and this increased pressure on the collection of taxes and the recruitment of civil servants. Royal bailiffs, county sheriffs and court officials were put in charge of collecting the revenue and other administrative tasks. Local noblemen were made lieutenant governors to represent the monarch in the counties. The conscription of soldiers was organised by a system of national registration of the population. Local priests were given a major role in supervising the populace; the responsibilities of the established church included maintaining the national register.

Profound changes also took place at the central level as the government of the country took on a more permanent form. Civil service departments were organised into collegiate bodies. Administration was made more formalistic with greater requirements being made for the keeping of minutes and written records. The dividing-line between the dispensing of justice and the administration of the state also became more pronounced.

Two particular circumstances helped give greater power to the bureaucracy. One factor was quite simply the scale of the expansion of government; more specialisation, a growth in the number of civil servants, and as a result an increase in their power, were among the consequences of the enlargement of government business. The other factor was the absence from the country of Gustav II Adolf for long periods during the Thirty Years' War. After the King's death, the regency, which was headed by the chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, took on a crucial role. In practice the increasing influence of the state bureaucracy was to mean greater power for the nobles of the court.

It was the ideas of Axel Oxenstierna that were embodied in the

Instrument of Government (*regeringsform*) of 1634, which contained rules for the government of the country during the minority of the sovereign. This first formal constitution for Sweden is primarily an administrative statute. The responsibilities of the Riksdag were left relatively imprecise while the power of the Estates was gradually cut back to the advantage of the high-ranking civil servants and subsequently, after the “reduction” or confiscation of lands by the Crown, in favour of the growing power of the monarchy.

During the Caroline Autocracy which lasted from 1680 to 1718 the influence of the common people on the government of the country sank to its lowest ebb.

The Age of Liberty: Parliamentary Government

The main aim of the Instrument of Government of 1719, which was revised in 1720, was to return the system of government to the state of affairs obtaining before the Caroline Autocracy. However, in real terms the power structure was soon to develop in quite a different direction. Royal power was weakened while that of the Riksdag increased. Gradually more and more power was concentrated in the hands of the Four Estates. The Age of Liberty has been called the age of the rule of the Estates.

At a single stroke Sweden was transformed into a pioneer among European countries. The Swedish polity in the Age of Liberty was an experiment involving early variants of parliamentary government, a party system and freedom of expression.

The members of the Council who had previously either enjoyed a great measure of independence or simply been the king’s men, were made answerable for their office to the Riksdag. The Estates were able, by means of a judicial procedure to divorce a Councillor from his office, to force undesirable “members of the government” to resign. The idea that the holders of the executive power are in a relation of political dependence on the parliamentary assembly, which is the defining characteristic of parliamentary government, had for all practical purposes become reality.

The party system of the Age of Liberty was very unlike the political

parties we are familiar with today. The parties then were not electoral organisations with an extensive network of local branches, while the methods available for the formation of public opinion were also quite different. The labels “Hats” and “Caps” referred mainly to parliamentary caucuses, clubs of members of the Riksdag, more or less loosely bound together by shared views. However, this division was to be the nucleus for the formation of political parties and led to the intensification of both divergences of opinion in parliament and the wider public debate. It was this era that led the writer Jacob Wallenberg to coin the expression that political parties are the lifeblood of free states.

Serious reservations have to be made, however, in relation to the notion of freedom of expression in the Age of Liberty. The limits to what could be printed were still very sharply defined; religious censorship, in particular, remained in force. Nevertheless the eighteenth century witnessed the development of a flourishing culture of periodicals and pamphlets. Public debate was livelier than it had ever been before. It was the Freedom of the Press Act introduced in 1766 which was of major significance here; the Act was made a fundamental law, ie it was given constitutional status. Among its provisions was a rule that the official documents of public authorities should in principle be available to the public for inspection. This principle of publicity (*offentlighetsprincip*) improved supervision and control over the bureaucracy. The Act of 1766 also clarified which statutes had constitutional status as fundamental laws. The concept of the fundamental law was introduced by prescribing a particular form of enactment for statutes of this kind: a fundamental law had to be passed in identical wording by two different sessions of the Riksdag with a general election intervening between the decisions.

However, the experiments in parliamentary government made during the Age of Liberty were to produce mixed results. Gradually more and more state functions accrued to the Estates. The Crown was increasingly marginalised; a symbol of the king's impotence was the royal stamp which was substituted for the monarch's signature. The Riksdag, and in particular its powerful Secret Committee, arrogated to itself duties that were purely administrative. The Riksdag even began to interfere in the administration of justice. Greater power without adequate controls leads to temptation; corruption and bribery became common elements of parliamentary life, not least at the instigation of foreign powers.

Even though the Age of Liberty can be seen as an era of parliamentary

government, it was far from democratic. The right to vote was still restricted and the members of the Riksdag were far from being representative of the average citizen. In practice it was high-ranking civil servants who were the predominant element in the Estates of the nobility, the clergy and the burgesses.

The form of government of the Age of Liberty, which was so advanced for its time, was to be a historical parenthesis that only lasted five decades. Once more the pendulum would swing back. A period of great royal power followed the coup staged by Gustav III in 1772 and the Act of Union and Security passed in 1789. Nevertheless, the Gustavian Autocracy was itself not to last more than a few decades. With the loss of Finland in 1809 Sweden faced a constitutional crisis. Demands for a new constitution were growing.

1809: The Separation of Powers

When Gustav IV Adolf was deposed by a coup d'état in March 1809 the constitutional crisis became acute. The new Instrument of Government adopted in June 1809 was to last, with numerous amendments, until 1975.

For many years both the preamble and the articles of the Instrument of Government were to be the subject of various interpretations on the part of political scientists and historians. A crucial point of contention was the relative degree of foreign and domestic influence involved in its creation.

The fundamental principle of the Instrument of Government of 1809 was the concept of the separation of powers which was then common property throughout Europe. Montesquieu's ideas on the separation of the powers of government and the balance between its legislative, executive and judicial branches had already been implemented in other countries and were familiar notions in Sweden.

However, domestic experience also left profound marks on the constitutional apparatus erected in 1809. The Instrument of Government has been called "the history of Sweden rewritten as legal paragraphs". The fathers of the constitution wanted to avoid both the unfettered power of the Estates in the Age of Liberty and the absolutism of the royal regime.

The solution lay in making different state bodies accountable for precisely defined responsibilities and in certain cases by sharing decision-making power among a number of different authorities as well as by establishing special institutions of control. The Instrument of Government of 1809 was to be a step along the road to constitutional government.

Executive power was vested in the monarch while the Riksdag was to have nothing to do with the administration: "the King alone has the right to rule the realm in the manner prescribed by this Instrument of Government". Legislative power was divided between the Crown and the Riksdag; both were given the power to initiate and to veto legislative matters. The Riksdag alone, however, had the power to determine taxation: "the ancient right of the Swedish people to decide taxation may be exercised by the Estates of the Riksdag alone". The Riksdag also had the power over the budget of the state's expenditure.

At that time several countries had adopted solemn proclamations on human rights and freedoms; the American and French versions were particularly well-known. The Instrument of Government of 1809, however, did not include a specific list of rights and freedoms; it did contain a more general article (paragraph 16) couched in antique turns of phrase which could be traced back to the royal charters of the medieval period.

A novel feature of the Instrument of Government of 1809 were the special institutions it established to exercise scrutiny and control over government. Government ministers, the King's Councillors, could be held accountable both judicially and politically. The Constitutional Committee of the Riksdag was given a vital role in the political scrutiny of government ministers. The Riksdag's power of control was additionally strengthened by the appointment of parliamentary auditors who were chosen by the Estates and, in particular, by the institution of the Parliamentary Ombudsman whose responsibility it was to supervise the observance of laws. After the Instrument of Government, three further fundamental laws were adopted: the Act of Succession, the Act on the Freedom of the Press and the Riksdag Act, which governs parliamentary procedure.

Proposals were already being put forward at the beginning of the nineteenth century for the reform of the antiquated Riksdag of the Estates. Social change meant that ever larger sections of the population were excluded both from the franchise and from eligibility to stand as

candidates for election. Despite repeated attempts at reform it would not be until 1866 that the Riksdag of the Four Estates was abolished and replaced by a bicameral legislature; representation on a corporate basis thus gave way to the representation of the individual.

Nevertheless the franchise to the new Riksdag remained very restrictive. At the general election of 1872, almost ninety per cent of the population had no right to vote. As electoral turnout was also very low, the Riksdag was directly representative of only a tiny percentage of the people. The constitutional framework had been revised but the real power structures had been retained.

As the nineteenth century drew on it became increasingly apparent that the political institutions were lagging behind, both in relation to the economic and social changes taking place and by comparison with the constitutional reforms being enacted in many parts of Europe.

The tidal waves of revolution in Europe in 1830 and 1848 left only faint ripples in their wake in Sweden. Although the guild system was abolished, the currents of liberal thought were weaker in Sweden than elsewhere. The towns and cities were slow to expand and were unable to provide a breeding ground for a significant urban culture. The *ancien régime*, symbolised in the person of the monarch and the high-ranking state officials, was able to remain at the helm for many years. Towards the end of the century poverty was widespread and emigration offered a last way out for many Swedes. The most ambitious fifth of the population left the country, most of them emigrating to the United States.

Industrialisation: the Social Movements

Once industrialisation finally got going in Sweden, the process was very intensive. The economic, social and political structures of the country were subject to profound transformations particularly during the decades on either side of the turn of the century, which witnessed the birth of Sweden as a modern nation.

Between 1870 and 1910 the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture fell from 72 to 50 per cent. Industry demanded labour and the cities grew; improved transport and communications made the country smaller. Newspapers were established and reached readers in

ever broader groups. New ideas were quickly disseminated. Social and geographic mobility dissolved ancient ties and created new loyalties.

New forms of social organisation and association were born. The Free Church movement was started as an alternative to the ossified established church and was to invent new forms of associational activity. The model of organisation it developed was to inspire the foundation of the temperance movement and the first workers' associations. Gradually these movements grew in number, in terms both of their membership and recruitment. By the turn of the century the social movements (*folkrörelser*) had roughly half a million members.

The social movements were of enormous importance to the political changes that followed in their wake. New groups of citizens were mobilised on a voluntary, collective and autonomous basis for involvement in social and political work. The social movements have been called a school for democracy. Gradually the major interest organisations, particularly the trade unions and the various industrial associations, came to exert considerable influence over political life.

The expansion of the social movements is also closely linked to the birth of the modern system of political parties. The campaigns to establish labour and agrarian organisations also had party political implications. The fact that some of the parties have their roots in the social movements has meant that party members in Sweden have never constituted a social elite. The social movements have served as an alternative career route to decision-making posts in public life.

The Right to Vote and Parliamentary Government

The rapid changes taking place in Swedish society were to provide the state with a more active role. More and more groups made demands for a say in the determination of public policy and the struggle for control of the state intensified. It was still only a privileged minority who enjoyed political power. In Sweden the struggle for universal and equal suffrage was to be a long one.

The franchise and eligibility conditions established by the parliamentary reform of 1866 were very restrictive. The Upper House of the Riksdag was indirectly elected; its members were appointed by the town and county councils. The franchise to these local authorities was not only restricted but also unevenly apportioned; the number of votes held

by an individual depended on his income and property. Companies and businesses were also enfranchised as corporate bodies. In several municipalities a single individual disposed of more than half of all the votes. If the Upper House was appointed by only a tiny minority of individuals, even fewer had any opportunity of being elected. The eligibility conditions were very stringent and a very high income or considerable property was required. No more than 6,000 or so Swedes were eligible for election. The Upper House was made up of older men from a tiny and wealthy upper class.

The Lower House was directly elected. The franchise was not graded and everyone entitled to take part in the election had just one vote. On the other hand few people could meet the qualifications for the franchise. Most men failed at the income qualification. The franchise provisions favoured farmers who gained considerable influence in the Lower House.

By the turn of the century the voting rights issue was the dominant political conflict. The Liberals and the Social Democrats campaigned for universal suffrage. Both the "parliaments of the people" held in 1893 and 1896 and the national strike of 1902 served to underscore demands for the abolition of the franchise qualifications. Several proposals for a relaxation of the electoral rules failed to pass the Riksdag because of the opposition of the Conservatives. The Liberal government put forward a new proposal to the Riksdag in 1906. The Prime Minister Karl Staaff held a great speech in the Lower House in which he declared that if the reform were voted down, in future the issue would be whether "royal power with the power of the people or royal power with the power of the mighty" should rule the country. The reform bill was voted down, nonetheless. Staaff wanted to call new elections but King Oscar II refused; Staaff resigned and Arvid Lindman, a Conservative, became the new Prime Minister.

Lindman enjoyed greater success. In 1907 the Conservatives agreed to universal suffrage for the vast majority of men over the age of 24; in local government elections the maximum number of votes held by an individual voter would be 40. In return for their support, the Conservatives demanded confirmation of the equal status of the Upper House with that of the Lower and a reform of the electoral system. The system of majority voting that had previously been in force had greatly favoured the largest party. Now that large groups of workers and the low-paid were to be enfranchised, the Conservatives were afraid they

would be wiped out. The new electoral system of proportional representation ensured that the Conservatives would retain at least a minority of seats. The reform bill was finally passed in 1909.

The general election of 1911 was the first to be held under the new rules. The reform of voting rights meant that there were half a million new voters. The Social Democrats made the biggest gains and virtually doubled the number of seats they held in the Lower House of the Riksdag.

The struggle for democracy was to be continued in the campaigns for women's suffrage and for the abolition of the 40-degree voting scale as well as in the conflict over the principles of parliamentary government. The issue was who should determine the composition of the Government; the monarch or the majority of the Riksdag? The struggle came to a head during the "Courtyard Crisis" of 1914. Conservative supporters of armament arranged a protest march in Stockholm. Gustav V held a nationalistic speech to the demonstrators gathered in the courtyard of the royal castle in which he distanced himself from the policy of the Government. Prime Minister Staaff resigned in protest.

However, just a few years later the principles of parliamentary government were to win a resounding and final victory. With the formation of a coalition government of Liberals and Social Democrats in 1917 it was finally accepted that it was the strength of the parties in the Riksdag that would determine the composition of future governments.

In 1918 the Government led by Nils Edén and Hjalmar Branting moved a bill to introduce universal suffrage. Women would be given the right to vote and the 40-degree scale would be abolished. Initially the Conservatives opposed the reform but under pressure of the threat posed by revolutionary movements in Russia and on the Continent the opposition gave way. It was in 1921 that a bill was finally passed allowing universal and equal suffrage. At last democracy had triumphed.

Modernisation: the Art of Engineering

The new political system did not immediately fulfil people's expectations. As in many other European countries, it proved difficult to find a

way of instituting a fully functioning parliamentary government in Sweden. Party splits in the Riksdag also made it hard to create stable majority governments. Instead the period from 1920 to 1933 was marked by a series of minority governments and successive government crises. Political instability was especially problematic in the light of the demands made on government by the economic crisis and the level of unemployment at the beginning of the 1930s.

In 1933 the Social Democrats managed to gain the support of the Agrarian League for essential elements of their policy program. In return the Social Democrats agreed to support the agricultural policy of the League. This “horse-trading” meant that there was now a majority in the Riksdag for crucial elements of economic policy. The era of minority governments was over and the Government was to take on a more powerful and more active role in running the country.

After the general election of 1936 the partnership between the Social Democrats and the Agrarian League became more permanent in nature and together the parties formed a “red-green” coalition government. It was in the final years of the 1930s that politics took a turn that was to have lasting consequences for the decades that followed. In 1938 the Basic Agreement (also known as the Saltsjöbaden Agreement) was signed by the two major interest organisations of the labour market, the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisationen*, LO) and the Swedish Employers’ Federation (*Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen*, SAF) at Saltsjöbaden outside Stockholm; its primary aim was to secure industrial peace. The Social Democrats also made it clear to the owners of private industry that they need not fear large-scale nationalisation. On the contrary, the labour movement accepted that trade and industry would remain in private hands on condition that production was efficiently managed and that the owners in their turn accepted that the labour movement would use its political power in the Riksdag and in government to implement its program of social welfare. This consensus, which has been called “the historic compromise between labour and capital”, was the basis on which the form of social organisation which would subsequently be known as the Swedish Model was developed. During the Second World War Sweden was governed by a coalition comprising all the political parties except the Communists.

The decades following the War were characterised by rapid economic growth. The major export-oriented industries were very successful. One of the main beneficiaries of the economic surplus was the expanding

public sector. The most expansive stage in the development of the welfare state was, therefore, closely linked to concepts such as growth, productivity, technology, science and engineering. It is hardly surprising that this way of thinking was also adopted in politics and social life in general. A philosophy of social engineering came to dominate the welfare state. Politics became virtually synonymous with modernisation, planning, reorganisation and large-scale production.

It was not until the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s that the reaction set in. Ecological and decentralising views became more widespread. Voices critical of taxation, bureaucracy and the major collective welfare systems grew louder. The expansion of the welfare state came to an end during the 1980s. An increasing number of the constituent elements of the Swedish Model were being challenged.

The Modernisation of the Constitution

During the heyday of the Swedish Model local authorities were amalgamated and the interest organisations were centralised. The articles of the constitution were also to succumb to the vogue for rationalisation. There was actually no acute need for reform. In many areas the working practices of the polity had evolved independently of the written constitution. The principles of parliamentary government, for example, had become firmly established without any changes to the articles of the constitution.

As time passed, however, the view that the constitution should be replaced became widely held. The reasons given for a general constitutional revision were that the legal situation in vital areas of government practice had become hazy, that the language of the constitution needed to be brought up to date and that there would be considerable problems involved in introducing a large number of major changes into the existing Instrument of Government without it giving way at the seams.

Nevertheless, the final decision in favour of a constitutional reform was long in coming. What became clear in the course of the work to develop a new constitutional text was that there were many interests clamouring to be heard on the matter. The political parties found it difficult to reach agreement with one another. The final result was something of a compromise in many respects.

The wide-ranging and protracted deliberations of the Commission of

Inquiry into the Constitution (1954–1963) failed to reach a unanimous verdict and instead presented two alternatives: one retaining the bicameral parliament, the other opting for a unicameral Riksdag. Despite its meticulous work and what were in many respects elegant solutions, the recommendations of the Commission led only to a number of changes in matters of detail. However, several of the other ideas of the Commission would be taken up by its successors.

A new commission was appointed in 1966. The members of this inquiry succeeded in reaching agreement on a partial reform of the constitution. As a result the bicameral legislature was replaced by a single chamber in 1971. A new electoral system was used for the first time in 1970. The principles of parliamentary government were written into the Instrument of Government which was retained otherwise unchanged.

The compromise reached in 1966 meant that the Social Democrats accepted the abolition of the bicameral system; the indirect method of electing the Upper House and its successive replacement and long election periods had helped the Social Democrats on several occasions to remain in power. With the advent of the new single-chamber system, the outcome of the election would have an immediate and direct impact on the composition of the government. The Social Democrats also accepted that the old electoral system, which had favoured the largest party, would be replaced by a modified system of proportional representation. Its proportionality would, however, be restricted by the imposition of an electoral threshold. The Social Democrats wanted to set the threshold at three per cent (to make sure that the Communists were not kept out of the Riksdag), while the Liberals wanted a five per cent barrier (to stop their competitors, the Christian Democrats, from entering parliament). Compromise was reached at four per cent. The Social Democrats also urged the introduction of a link to the local authorities, as compensation for the loss of the Upper House which had been appointed by the town and county councils. The solution lay in holding all elections on the same day – both for the Riksdag and for the county and municipal councils. The term of office was set at three years.

To sum up, the constitutional compromise of 1966 can be said to have been put together because the parties wanted to weaken one another. The Social Democrats were determined to split the non-Socialist parties while the latter wanted to abolish those elements of the constitution which had contributed to the long reign of social democracy. From this

perspective the compromise may be considered to have been successful. The new electoral system helped increase instability in the political system.

The constitutional commission carried on working and in 1972 it put forward proposals for a completely new Instrument of Government and a new Riksdag Act. It was on the basis of these proposals that the current Instrument of Government and Riksdag Act were adopted in 1974. Among its most controversial aspects were the provisions relating to the role of the Head of State. A compromise was reached which meant retaining the monarchy while depriving the sovereign of all decision-making power, including responsibility for the formation of the Government which would be vested in the Speaker and the Riksdag.

However, the main aim of the new constitution was not to change the nature of the polity but to codify its working practices such as had evolved during the lifetime of the previous constitution. What would later become clear was that the task of enshrining the actual workings of government in written form was much more difficult than expected. Far from straightforward the working practices were also not beyond dispute. Since that time several sections of the Instrument of Government have led to conflicts of interpretation and in some cases have been rewritten. This applies, for example, to the rules concerning the legislative power, to the relation between the Government and the administrative authorities as well as to the operation of the constitution in wartime or when there is a threat of war.

One of the major new features of the Instrument of Government of 1974 was that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individual citizens were specifically enumerated in a special chapter. It was to be this chapter, however, which gave rise to the fiercest criticism in the public debate. The rights enumerated were considered to have been formulated with insufficient precision while their protection was inadequately secured. These rights and freedoms were, therefore, made the subject of number of additional commissions of inquiry. Following the Riksdag's resolutions of 1976 and 1979 the chapter on rights and freedoms in the Instrument of Government was expanded.

The fact that after twenty five years of commissions of inquiry Sweden had at last acquired a new written constitution failed to put an end to the constitutional debate. On the contrary, that debate was to rage throughout the whole of the 1980s. New provisions were called for, including the setting up of a constitutional court. Above all, however,

the debate concerned the electoral system; it was its strict proportionality, the four per cent threshold, the joint election day and the three year term of office which evoked particular dissatisfaction. Those aspects of the constitution to which most political effort was devoted were the ones that caused the most disappointment. Despite efforts to alter the system once more, no agreement could be reached until 1993. Then the parties agreed to reintroduce a term of office of four years (while retaining the joint election day) and to increase the scope for voting for individual candidates.

During the early years of the 1990s the constitutional debate was staged against a background of deepening economic gloom. The economic crisis was reflected in a runaway budget deficit and the rapid rise of unemployment. Discussion centred on the budgetary process and the working methods of central government bodies such as the Riksdag and the Cabinet.

Constitutional debate at this time was also much affected by the process of internationalisation and the issue of accession to the European Union, in particular. Membership of the Union would require amending the constitution to allow supra-national decisions to take precedence over Swedish law.

Sweden Hardly Unique, And Yet...

Many aspects of contemporary government practice in Sweden would be familiar to the European visitor and when considered as a whole Swedish society hardly seems to constitute a unique system. The combination of parliamentary democracy, a market economy and a welfare state are nowadays the norm among the OECD-countries. And yet closer inspection reveals the distinguishing features that are to be found in the details.

In several cases these features peculiar to Sweden relate to what has not taken place. European visitors studying Swedish history may discover that numerous circumstances that would have been of decisive importance in their own countries, have had little or negligible effect in Sweden. The peculiarities of Sweden are due in no small measure to the absence of the following factors.

The feudal system did not have the same impact on Sweden as it had on many European countries. The rural population was not subjugated by all-powerful feudal lords and the landed aristocracy never played a dominant role in local jurisdiction, for example.

In the modern era Sweden has never been occupied by a foreign power. In consequence the national identity has not been seriously threatened, while powerful nationalist sentiments have rarely found expression and the nation's political life has not been coloured by a movement for national liberation. The country's political culture has also been shaped by the fact that for almost two hundred years Sweden has not been at war.

Sweden lacks a revolutionary tradition. In other countries the polity has frequently been altered by violent upheavals; in Sweden change has come about gradually and peaceably. The Estate of the nobility peacefully renounced power in 1866. Although universal suffrage was adopted in 1918 under the threat of a revolutionary uprising, the rebellion never came.

Sweden is governed not as a federal system but as a unitary state. The regions have never enjoyed sufficient autonomy for it to be necessary to develop the various conflict-solving mechanisms of a federal constitution.

Sweden has relatively few large cities. Through their family ties and place of residence Swedes have by and large felt closer to the countryside and the natural world than to the anonymity and hurly-burly of urban life. In consequence urban culture has remained comparatively underdeveloped.

Many other countries have a vital civil society which is relatively independent of government influence. Although the social movements have to some extent replaced the network of civil society, the voluntary organisation of the citizenry has been strongly dependent on the state.

History and its Dual Inheritance

Looking back at the main periods of Swedish history what becomes clear is that in some instances the roots of the modern Swedish polity can be traced far back in time. By way of a brief summary it is possible to distinguish five particular circumstances that have helped form the Swedish system of government.

Inherited from the Middle Ages is an ancient tradition of local self-government which still makes itself felt today, despite occasional challenges from central government.

Of lasting significance was the creation in the period of Sweden's status as a Great Power of a well-organised system of state regulation; its administrative contours can still be discerned in the workings of the central administrative agencies and other public authorities.

The experimentation in the Age of Liberty with parliamentary government and a system of political parties was not to survive the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, an unbroken line connects the publicity principle introduced by the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766 with the foundations of the modern system of freedom of information.

The society born out of industrialisation witnessed the fading away of the old centres of power and the advent of new ones. The social movements which developed at that time constitute a vital element in the structure of twentieth-century society.

A culture of social engineering initiated by the sheer scale of the process of modernisation has shaped both ideas about the organisation of society and the particular power elite which depends for its authority on the knowledge and expertise it commands.

Is there a common denominator to be found among these five distinguishing features? Allowing for a degree of simplification, two basic themes stand out: equality and strong government.

Local self-government, freedom of information and the social movements can all be seen as embodying the claims of the common man to play a part in government, to what we understand in modern terms as equality, as the right of every individual to exert influence over common affairs.

State regulation and social engineering represent the other side of the foundations of the polity. Sweden has been governed by a determined rulership that has been able to set its stamp on society. The major role played by the state together with the powers of the political planners have been seen as characterising the Sweden of the last fifty years, but the tradition of strong state power goes back much further in time.

A recurrent theme in the history of political theory is the tension between freedom and order. Historical factors have lent this universal dilemma a particular colouring in Sweden. The Swedish polity has managed to combine democratic and egalitarian elements with a powerful central state. The exercise of state power has been forced both to

respect and to adapt itself to a freedom-loving populace. The Swedish public has always had to keep a watchful eye on a more or less benign rulership.

Swedish society could be characterised as a three-tier structure with a strong central level, a weak middle level and a strong local level.

3 The Swedish Models

The term “Swedish Model” is frequently used to characterise Swedish society in general and the Swedish welfare state in particular. The use of this term is based on the assumption that Swedish society exhibits certain distinctive features when compared with other countries. The question is to what extent the term can still be applied in the current situation. There are two problems connected with the notion of the Swedish Model. The first is that the concept is ambiguous and used to describe entities that are to some extent different in kind. The second problem has to do with the changes currently taking place in Swedish society. Reference to the various “Swedish Models” is more appropriate when describing the society of yesterday than that of today. The Swedish Model has reached a turning-point.

Challenges to the “Models”

These two problems are of course mutually interdependent. The answer to the question whether, and if so when, the Swedish Model reached its peak depends on what precisely is entailed in the use of the concept. And yet that very connection may itself provide the basis for a description of the current social changes. The debate on the nature of the Swedish Model has drawn attention to a number of important features of the Swedish social system. An analysis of these characteristic features makes it possible to describe social developments and to determine in what respects Swedish society is currently changing and where it is headed.

The Resolution of Labour Market Conflicts

The term Swedish Model has been used to describe a particular method for regulating industrial relations. Trade unions and employers were brought together around the negotiating table on the basis of their common interest in resolving conflicts in a regulated fashion and without state intervention. A number of agreements, of which the most famous is the Saltsjöbaden Agreement of 1938, established the fundamentals of the Swedish system of collective bargaining. The spirit of Saltsjöbaden was greatly helped by the common interest of both sides in keeping government out of the negotiating round. The basic idea was that management and unions would jointly arrange agreements on wages and working conditions on an independent basis. A government incomes policy goes against the grain of the Swedish Model for negotiating wage settlements.

In a superficial sense the idea behind the regulatory system devised half a century ago is still valid. Nevertheless it can hardly be correct any longer to describe the Swedish bargaining rounds as independent, if that is understood to mean free of state intervention. Public sector employees nowadays have quite a different numerical significance than when the Saltsjöbaden Agreement was signed. Central and local government have assumed a crucial role as employers. Pay deals throughout the labour market have become increasingly closely linked to taxation policy and economic policy in general. The wages freeze and temporary institution of compulsory arbitration introduced in 1990 meant that the key principle of the Swedish Model of keeping wage negotiations free of government involvement had been abandoned.

Centralised Bargaining

The Swedish Model has not only been used to describe the general regulatory system operating within the labour market but also to characterise the very precise separation of powers governing wage settlements. During the 1950s a period of strongly centralised collective bargaining began. In practice the power to set the wages of the Swedish public was exercised by the leaderships of both LO and SAF. Centrally negotiated agreements set the pattern for the whole of the labour market and centralisation made it easier to implement a wages policy based on solidarity. Vital to the existence of a system of this kind was the preva-

lence of a small number of centralised and homogeneous interest organisations.

In the course of a few decades the structure of these organisations has changed drastically. The organisations are no longer few in number, nor are they centralised or homogeneous. The number of negotiating parties has risen greatly owing to such factors as the advent of trade unions representing public employees, the establishment of negotiating cartels and a system of negotiation based on individual unions. The power enjoyed by the peak organisations has been diminished to a corresponding extent. The importance of local pay deals has increased. Instead of a single centralised bargaining round, pay deals are nowadays a complicated game, part of which is played out on the stage of the mass media. The implementation of a wages policy based on solidarity – while at the same time exercising restraint and maintaining low inflation and international competitiveness – has become much more difficult.

The Historic Compromise

The meaning of the term Swedish Model has been broadened to refer to more than just the regulatory system and power structure of the labour market. The agreements made between both sides of the labour market at the end of the 1930s have been seen as embodying a greater degree of mutual understanding between the two main classes of the industrial society, as a historic compromise between labour and capital. Industry recognised that the Social Democrats would make use of the political power their parliamentary majority gave them to implement major welfare reforms. For its part the labour movement refrained from using the power of the state to nationalise industry. Both sides were brought closer together by their common interest in creating a rational system of production, industrial regeneration and competitive exporting industries.

Although both industry and the labour movement still share the conviction that an efficient system of industrial production is needed, vital elements of that historic compromise have now been lost. A significant turning point can be dated to the 1970s. The reforms of working life carried out in the first half of the 1970s were implemented by legislation and not by agreement as the trade union movement availed itself of the state power the Social Democrats controlled. The employers

openly went on the attack against the labour movement. The debate on the proposed employee investment funds which lasted for almost ten years was to be very hard and bitterly fought. The accompanying political polarisation has undermined the historic compromise.

The Culture of Consensus

Both the Saltsjöbaden Agreement and the historic compromise, have been seen, especially by foreign observers, as exemplifying a particular form of political culture, a Swedish style of public life. The image of the Swedish Model of decision-making has been shaped above all by the absence of violent conflicts and an orientation towards compromise and consensus. The notion of a culture of consensus does not imply the total absence of conflict and dissension but has to do with the existence of a special procedure for arriving at collective decisions. A crucial element of this method is that all the parties concerned are given a chance to have their say and to be heard. Another aspect of the procedure is that decisions grow out of deliberations and consultations between the parties.

To what extent a change has actually taken place to the Swedish culture of consensus remains uncertain. Phenomena as intangible as "culture" and "style" belong to those areas of social science research that are hardest to document. However, there is much to suggest that several of the changes currently taking place in society have made the culture of consensus more problematic. Polarisation has become greater while the more independent and active role played by the mass media is an important factor. It must also be beyond dispute that a change has taken place in the image of the Swedish culture of consensus as reflected in the public debate in which this culture is now painted in less positive terms and frequently associated with standardisation and conflict avoidance.

Full Employment

The goal of low unemployment is by no means unique to Sweden. What has, however, come to be seen in international terms as a particularly Swedish phenomenon is the attempt to combine full employment with

low inflation, high growth and a more equitable distribution of income. This model involves a combination of restrictive demand policy, a wages policy based on solidarity and an interventionist labour market policy. The main elements of this labour market policy are the creation of new jobs and employment training schemes to improve the mobility of the labour force. A wages policy based on high minimum wages would mean that less economically sound companies would be forced to close down. The labour market policy would allow the labour force released to be re-employed in growth areas of the economy. In this way a policy based on full employment and wage settlements based on solidarity would accelerate the restructuring of industry.

In at least one crucial respect labour market policy could be considered a success right up until the 1980s. Unemployment was for all practical purposes non-existent and the target of full employment had been achieved. However, full employment was combined not with low but with high inflation, and not with high but with low rates of growth. In the 1980s there were already numerous signs appearing that the Swedish economy was afflicted with serious structural problems. The high level of unemployment at the beginning of the 1990s appeared to confirm these symptoms of crisis. Sweden currently faces even greater problems in adjusting to rapidly changing conditions and in attempting to exploit new economic opportunities. The risk of Sweden becoming yet another country to suffer large-scale, long-term unemployment is growing increasingly evident.

The Strong Society

A further distinguishing feature of contemporary Swedish society is the existence of a very large public sector. Although its expansion had already started in the 1930s, the greatest period of growth took place during the 1960s and 1970s. Sweden currently has the largest public sector in the western world when considered in terms of the tax level and of the proportion of GDP accounted for by public expenditure. Behind this expansion lay the idea of safeguarding the welfare of the people by the operation of "the strong society" – a concept which blurred the distinction between the state and civil society. It is a characteristic of the Swedish welfare state that a very large part of the production of services is publicly owned and managed. Health and social care,

education and child care are provided almost exclusively by central or local government agencies. The proportion of employees working in the public sector more than doubled during the 1960s and 1970s.

The concept of the strong society made possible the transformation of fundamental cleavages into manageable social problems which could be solved by the expansion of the public sector. Given the currently high level of taxation, any further tax increases would involve economic problems of such magnitude that they are virtually unthinkable. As such a large part of the labour force is publicly employed, the organisation, use of resources and adaptability of the public sector has developed into a major factor affecting the growth and efficiency of the whole economy. It has become more difficult to implement policies through reforms and by expanding the public sector. Nowadays there are many people to whom the public sector would seem to be the problem rather than the answer.

Universalism

The welfare system has been essentially comprehensive in nature. Its guiding principle has been that social benefits should be available to every citizen or to whole categories of citizens (such as pensioners, children, mothers, the unemployed, etc.) without means-testing. It was believed that the universalist ethos of welfare policy could serve as an integrating force by reducing the significance of the divisions that exist between various groups in society. If everyone is part of the system and shares both the costs and the benefits, the legitimacy of the system will be strengthened as will the allegiance of the population to it.

In practical terms the principle of universal provision has been implemented through standardisation. The commitment to equality has meant that every citizen is considered to be entitled to the same level of service. In comparative terms it is easiest to implement a universalist policy in a country with a largely uniform and homogeneous population and during an era when the priority is to meet a specific number of fundamental requirements. The demands of the public are, however, becoming increasingly differentiated. In consequence the standard solutions of a universalist ethos are proving less and less capable of meeting the varied wishes of the public.

Technocracy

The Swedish Model contains a considerable element of social engineering. Knowledge, expertise and skill are major sources of authority. Experts and specialists have played an active role in the formation and implementation of public policy while social problems have been overcome by administrative solutions. Economic and other forms of sociological expertise have assumed a prominent role in the modern welfare state.

Currently a distinct reaction is being noted on the part of the public against various attempts by their representatives to supervise the population. Greater weight is being given to the integrity of the individual. Since the 1970s more attention has been paid to the rights and freedoms of individual citizens both in legislation and in the public debate. The legitimacy of technocratic rule has been weakened.

Corporatism

The major interest organisations were co-opted into becoming jointly responsible for large parts of public policy. The organisations participated in all aspects of the decision-making process, both in the preparatory phases (initiatives, commissions of inquiry, referrals) and in implementation (representation on public bodies, negotiations and joint responsibility for the enactment of reforms). The corporatist system is characterised by a partnership between the state and the organised interest groups.

During the latter half of the 1970s the negative aspects of the corporatist system featured widely in public debate when much emphasis was placed on the power of the special interests vis-a-vis the public interest. As a result the organisations imposed certain restrictions on themselves in the performance of their public duties. The role played by the interest organisations on the executive boards of the central administrative agencies was subject to criticism. As the whole system of public committees was being slimmed down, the opportunities available to the interest organisations to influence policy through their representation on commissions of inquiry were also reduced.

Centralisation

The Swedish Model was based on a centralised organisation of society. Growth and efficiency were to be improved by centralisation and large-scale production. The expansion of the public sector was succeeded by a process of reorganisation and structural change. Public policy encouraged structural change to rationalise industry. The relocation of the population led to the depopulation of the countryside. The municipalities, local associations and local party organisations were amalgamated into larger units. Social planning was geared to large scale programs and national data systems. The urban areas were redesigned by tearing down old buildings and erecting new mass-produced housing. The peak of the growth era, the “boom” years, occurred during the latter half of the 1960s.

The social changes that have taken place in the last two decades can be seen in part as a reaction to the planning model based on centralisation. The desirability of large-scale solutions has been questioned particularly in town planning, health care and local government administration. Systems of neighbourhood councils and other forms of local decision-making are being tried out within the boundaries of the larger municipalities. In many areas decentralisation has replaced centralisation and local initiatives are being encouraged. Regions and local areas are being given greater autonomy.

The Gender Bias

A number of key elements of the Swedish Model are embedded in the intellectual and working life of the Swedish Male. The historic compromise between labour and capital takes for granted that the average member of the public is a male industrial worker. The policy of full employment was usually synonymous with a policy of full male employment. In relation to labour market reforms the policy of universalism was primarily universalism for men. Equal opportunities were to be largely equal opportunities within the society of men.

This single-sex perspective is now being replaced by a different view. The unpaid domestic work carried out by women and the child care they provided were vital to the growth of the Swedish labour movement. The expansion of the public sector meant that women became wage-earners and that domestic work which had previously been unpaid was taken

over by central and local government agencies. The status of women was changed when they were given the right to paid employment and to the provision of child care. Nevertheless in most areas of society it is still men who hold the decision-making positions. As a result the demands of women for greater power are coming into conflict with the established model.

A Turning-Point

This survey makes clear that in one regard at least the evidence points in a single direction. In every instance those features once seen as characteristic of the Swedish Model are proving inadequate to describe Swedish society as it is today. These features have all been weakened or in some cases may even have disappeared. Irrespective of how the Swedish Model is defined, it is clear that social changes are moving society away from the particular model which was long held to be emblematic of Sweden. The Swedish Model can thus be said to have reached a turning-point. It is not possible to ascertain at what exact point the model was at its peak. The date varies depending on which aspects are being considered; in some cases dating is impossible because gradually evolving processes are involved. Nevertheless, it would seem that the early 1970s were decisive in several respects. The subsequent years have tended to confirm the fact that what was occurring were not temporary crises but a much more widespread and profound process of social transformation.

Of course there is no single answer to the major question of why the social changes currently taking place are moving society away from the distinguishing features of the Swedish Model. What is involved is a historic process of transformation composed of a number of different elements. The most general explanation is that many of the characteristics of the Swedish Model were inextricably linked to the era of the industrial society. The development of a post-industrial, internationalised information society is leading to solutions based on different forms of social organisation.

There is, however, a dynamic process inherent in the social system of the Swedish Model. The fact that the Swedish Model is not uniform but defined by a variety of diverse features may itself explain why change is taking place. The greater the number of elements in a system, the higher

the probability of internal tensions between its constituent parts. While some elements of the Swedish Model were easy to combine at the same time, there were major latent conflicts between a number of other elements. A system of internal contradictions contains a dynamic element. A general hypothesis on the nature of social change is that it is contradictory forces that lead to change.

The driving forces behind the social changes currently taking place can therefore be divided into two groups. One group is made up of external factors which are for the most part not unique to Sweden but apply to all similar social systems. The other type of explanation relates to internal factors. Change is brought about by conflicts and tensions between the particular features of the Swedish Models.

4 The International Context

There are three main changes taking place on the international scene that have had major consequences for Swedish society. The first of these changes is the continuing internationalisation of the economy which has the effect of restricting the opportunities available for arriving at nationally-based solutions to particular problems. The second change is the process of European integration and the issue of Sweden's potential membership of the European Union. The third change has been the ending of the Cold War which has meant that Sweden's traditional foreign policy of neutrality is having to come to terms with an entirely new situation.

The Internationalised Economy

The fact that Sweden is a small, open and export-oriented economy is not a new phenomenon. Swedish exports of raw materials towards the end of the nineteenth century paved the way for a late but rapid process of industrialisation, while during the twentieth century the export of raw materials and manufactured goods laid the foundations of the Swedish welfare system.

The role played by the international trading groups in Swedish industrial production has expanded in tandem with the growth of foreign trade. By the mid-1980s Swedish transnational companies accounted for more than half of Swedish exports. However, the transnational compa-

nies have transferred an increasing proportion of their operations abroad, primarily to the countries of the European Union. Swedish direct investment in foreign countries ballooned during the 1980s. The foreign production of Swedish transnational companies has risen faster than their exports and the Swedish domestic market accounts for an ever diminishing proportion of the group turnover of these companies.

As a result of their pronounced orientation towards international markets, Swedish industry and commerce have gone through a massive structural transformation in recent decades. The importance of the traditional industries based on raw materials has diminished while manufacturing and engineering have grown in importance, particularly the highly skilled sectors of industry. Advanced research and development are mainly concentrated in the pharmacological and electronic industries.

The internationalisation of the financial markets has had major repercussions in Sweden as well. The rules for the international movement of capital have been liberalised in several stages. The majority of Swedish exchange control regulations were abolished in 1989. Swedish investment abroad increased strongly during the 1980s. The extravagant investments made in foreign property in the late 1980s were a contributory factor to the subsequent financial crash.

The internationalisation of the economy has brought about a shift in power in favour of the owners of capital. The deregulation of the financial markets means that capital can move freely across national borders. The owners of capital have gained greater freedom to invest their capital in those countries that give the highest return. Internationalisation also means that the power of domestic owners of capital has been increased both in relation to their employees and to the political decision-making bodies. The freedom to relocate capital resources to other countries has now become a realistic threat when used in negotiations with trade unions on wages and working conditions or to influence the formation by politicians of economic policies affecting the return on capital. The increased room for manoeuvre of the owners of capital involves a narrowing of the negotiating options of the labour force as well as of the room for manoeuvre of politicians. In November 1992 the floating rate of exchange for the Swedish *krona* provided a clear illustration of the inability of the nation state to resist the major international movements of capital and currency speculation for any length of time.

European Integration

When the markets gain the upper hand over politicians as a result of internationalisation, politicians have the option of re-establishing parity with the markets by working together at the supranational level. A powerful argument for a European union is to strengthen the supranational effectiveness of the political decision-making bodies. The issue of European political integration is, however, a matter of very great controversy in Sweden.

The aim of official foreign policy in Sweden is for Sweden to work in closer collaboration with the European Union, or the EU. The first step towards this partnership involved Sweden, as one of six EFTA-countries, concluding a treaty with the European Community to set up a European Economic Area, EEA. The EEA agreement came into force on 1 January 1994. The treaty contains provisions on what are usually referred to as the four freedoms, the free movement of individuals, goods, capital and services. The aim of the treaty is to promote free trade and other forms of economic cooperation between the parties based on a common regulatory system with identical provisions. The treaty involves some 1,400 legal provisions of the regulatory system of the EU becoming part of Swedish law.

The second stage is full membership of the European Union. In 1991 the then Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson handed in Sweden's application for membership of the Union's predecessor, the European Community. In the statement of the Government's policy made in autumn 1991 Prime Minister Carl Bildt declared that one of the most important tasks facing the Government was to have the country integrated into European cooperation by successfully negotiating Sweden's accession to the EU. In the spring of 1994 the outcome of the negotiations was the conclusion of an agreement between Sweden and the EU. A referendum on membership will be held in November 1994. The decision to seek membership is supported by the major parties in the Riksdag: the Social Democrats, the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats. A couple of minor parties, the Left Party and the Greens, are opposed to Swedish membership of the EU. Even though a large majority in the Riksdag have backed the membership application, opinion among the population is much more divided. A large part of the

population is sceptical about membership and several of the major parties are affected by internal disputes on the matter.

Compared to the provisions of the EEA treaty, membership of the EU would extend cooperation in two respects. Firstly, Sweden would form part of the decision-making bodies of the Union. Secondly, other areas of activity would be affected than those covered by the EEA Treaty. Areas such as atomic energy, coal and steel, agriculture and fisheries also fall within the remit of the EC. In addition Sweden would be joining the Union as it is defined by the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992.

The Neutrality Policy Called into Question

The overriding aim of Swedish security policy is to preserve the liberty and independence of the country. According to the official formulation, its goal is to ensure freedom of action for the nation acting on its own or in voluntary association with other countries so as to be able to develop Swedish society politically, economically, socially, culturally and in every other respect in whatever situation may occur and subject to the forms the people of Sweden choose for themselves. A key element of Swedish security policy is to work at the international level for detente, disarmament, cooperation and democratic change.

A vital aim of current Swedish foreign policy is to have Sweden completely involved in European integration by means of the negotiations on accession to the EU. Sweden has declared itself prepared to accept possible measures to implement a common foreign and defence policy. What the detailed consequences of cooperation of this kind will be for Sweden's official foreign policy doctrine is a question that remains unanswered as yet. In May 1994 Sweden joined NATO's Partnership for Peace.

Political changes in Eastern and Central Europe are creating demands for a new pan-European form of partnership. It is the view of Sweden that the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is a vital instrument for achieving this goal.

Sweden is supporting the reform process in the former Communist countries in various ways – human rights, democratic structures, eco-

conomic development and environmental factors are of particular importance in this regard.

The United Nations remains a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. Great hopes are vested in the ability of the UN to promote political, social and economic development in the world. The UN is also an important forum for the work of disarmament.

By tradition Sweden is a free trade country. For an industrial country dependent on its exports it is of the utmost importance that trade barriers do not make international trade more difficult. Sweden also campaigns for the lifting by the industrialised countries of trade barriers to goods from the developing world and the countries of Eastern Europe.

Special emphasis is usually given to the process of Nordic cooperation in official Swedish declarations on foreign affairs. In recent years the aim has been to strengthen the political control of this cooperation. Foreign and defence policies have also been integrated into the process of Nordic cooperation. Particular importance is attached in this context to attempts to coordinate the interests of the Nordic countries in relation to the EU.

As part of its international development work Sweden is also attempting to contribute to an ecologically and economically sustainable development in the developing countries. The overriding goal of overseas aid policy is to fight poverty. Differences of opinion between the political parties have often emerged over the choice of countries as recipients for development aid. In line with the current guidelines recipient countries must satisfy requirements concerning democracy, human rights, free markets and the efficient use of development aid. Development aid amounts to roughly 0.9 per cent of GDP. The major recipient countries are Tanzania, India, Mozambique and Zambia. The major part of development work is administered by the Swedish International Development Authority, SIDA.

Defence and Foreign Policy

The traditional formulation of the fundamental principles of Sweden's security policy is in terms of non-alliance in peacetime, while aiming for neutrality in wartime.

Security policy is, however, changing in line with the developing

political situation in Europe. The conflicts of the Cold War between the two power blocs have disappeared. In military terms, however, the Nordic countries remain a vital strategic area. The essence of security policy is still therefore non-alliance, underpinned by a defence force capable of ensuring Sweden's neutrality in the event of war.

The changes that have occurred in the last few years which affect Sweden's security policy have led to a decision by the Riksdag to set up new guidelines for the civil and military wings of the defence force. A reduction in the overall strength of the military forces has been combined with the aim of improving the quality of the defence forces. This decision also involved changes to the management and organisational structures of the military authorities.

5 The Institutional Setting

The Swedish constitution consists of four fundamental laws: a statute to regulate the foundations of the polity, another to determine the principles governing the succession to the throne, a third law to guarantee the freedom of the press and finally a fourth statute to guarantee other forms of freedom of expression.

The Instrument of Government

The Instrument of Government lays down the basic rules for the operation of the Swedish polity. The current Instrument of Government was adopted in 1974 but has since been altered on several occasions.

The opening paragraph sets out a number of important principles: “All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people. Swedish democracy is founded on freedom of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. It shall be realised through a representative and parliamentary polity and through local self-government. Public power shall be exercised under the law.”

A number of fundamental rights and freedoms are stipulated in the second chapter of the Instrument of Government. These include provisions to safeguard the legal rights of the individual and to protect the freedoms of opinion while other provisions serve to guarantee social and cultural rights.

The Instrument of Government also sets out more detailed rules governing the Riksdag, the Head of State, the Government, legislation, the power of appropriation, relations with other states, justice, adminis-

tration, the power of scrutiny as well as the special provisions that come into force in time of war or when there is a threat of war.

The Act of Succession

The Act of Succession regulates the succession to the throne (see chapter 15 for more detail). This fundamental law dates from 1810. It applies to the present king, Carl XVI Gustaf, and his descendants. In 1980 female succession was introduced. The Act of Succession stipulates that elder siblings and their descendants take precedence over younger siblings and their descendants.

The Freedom of the Press Act

In its current form the Freedom of the Press Act dates from 1949; it lays down that everyone has the right “to publish his thoughts and opinions in print” (see chapter 13).

One of the major principles it enshrines is the prohibition of censorship. No public body has the right to scrutinise in advance the contents of any publication. Another fundamental provision concerns the principle of publicity and its basic rule that the general public has the right of access to official documents. Public officials enjoy a large measure of protection when disclosing information to the mass media.

Freedom of the press is not absolute. Offences against the freedom of the press include libel, affront, incitement to hatred of an ethnic group and endangering the safety of the realm. The rules on personal liability mean that only a single person may be punished, in the case of a newspaper this person is the responsible publisher.

The Freedom of Expression Act

The Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression was introduced in 1991 for those forms of expression not covered by the Freedom of the Press Act (see chapter 13). This newly created fundamental law concerns freedom of expression on radio, television and a number of other electronic media, satellite transmissions, films, videos and sound recordings. The Law on Freedom of Expression is similarly structured to the Freedom of the Press Act. The principles of the prohibition of censorship

and the right to publish have thus been extended to the whole field of the mass media.

Other Major Laws Relating to the Polity

The Riksdag Act lays down in greater detail the regulations for the organisation and working practices of parliament. The provisions of the Act include rules on when and how the Riksdag assembles, what committees of the Riksdag there should be and how the Riksdag should make its decisions. The Riksdag Act enjoys an intermediate status between an ordinary law and a fundamental law.

The Representation of the People Act contains detailed provisions on elections to the Riksdag, the county councils and municipal councils (see chapter 6). Elections to the Riksdag, the county and municipal councils have been held on the same day ever since 1970. Among the provisions of the Representation of the People Act are rules governing the holding of elections, the electoral authorities, the registration of party names, the composition of the ballot, the compilation of votes and the distribution of seats.

The Official Secrets Act sets out detailed provisions on the publicity principle and the exceptions thereto (see chapter 13). There are in fact numerous exceptions to this general right of public access to official documents. Large parts of the public record are confidential. The working material of public officials is not available to the public. Documents affecting foreign policy, defence, commercial affairs and the sanctity of private life and those relating to health and social care are deemed to be confidential.

The Local Government Act contains the fundamental provisions regulating the municipal authorities and county councils (see chapter 10). The Local Government Act sets out the broad rules governing the boundaries of the municipal authorities, their powers, organisation and management. The purpose of the Local Government Act is solely to establish the general principles. The local government authorities have been given greater freedom to determine their own internal organisation.

Institutions: Internationalisation and Individualisation

The constitution of a nation defines the ruling agencies of the state, their powers and their mutual relations. The Swedish constitution is enshrined in a number of fundamental principles and realised by a range of separate institutions. The following chapters look at each of these institutions.

However, these institutions should not be looked at statically but rather in a dynamic perspective. Special emphasis will therefore be given to the historical dimension. The rapid pace of social change and the crisis of the "Swedish Models" mean that many established institutions now find themselves facing a period of profound readjustment. The major challenges that confront them may be summarised under two headings: internationalisation and individualisation.

Parliament

The Instrument of Government lays down the principle of representative democracy. Democracy is practised mainly by indirect means. The decision-making assemblies of the central government, as well as of those operating at regional and local level, are appointed by the voters in elections held at regular intervals. The parliaments of other countries may also be appointed by proportional representation but the extreme proportionality of the Riksdag and the role of its Speaker in the formation of governments are features unique to Sweden.

Internationalisation affects the Riksdag both directly and indirectly. The focus of decision-making power is shifting away from national decision-making bodies and towards various inter-governmental institutions. As a result the power of elected representatives is exercised both by direct parliamentary representation on these international bodies, and by the scrutiny of government ministers and the officials responsible for the work of international negotiations. An element of individualisation is also being introduced into Swedish parliamentary life. The introduction of increased scope for the election of individual persons may mean that the relationship between the voters and their elected representatives will become more individually determined.

The Government

The principle of parliamentary government means that the executive body, the Government or Cabinet, depends for its existence on the support of the Riksdag. The Government is answerable to the Riksdag and the Riksdag can force the Government to resign. The Government and its workings are shaped by the requirement of the Instrument of Government that decisions be made collectively. Swedish government ministries are relatively small, particularly when compared with the gigantic government ministries that exist in many other countries.

The increased volatility of the electorate and the fragmentation of the party system have made the practice of government increasingly unstable. At the same time there are growing demands to coordinate the actions of the executive. The Government has a key role to play in coordinating national interests in decision-making processes held at the international level. The EEA-Treaty negotiations and the negotiations on Swedish membership of the EU have already brought about new forms of organisation in the workings of the Government Chancery. Membership of the Union would make the coordination of the work of integration a central element of the day to day working of the government ministries and in consequence this would involve the development of new working practices.

Public Administration

The principle of independent administrative authorities is fundamental to the operation of public administration in Sweden. Although the administrative authorities are subordinate to the Government, they enjoy an independent status and implement laws and ordinances in an autonomous fashion.

Public bodies are all, albeit in varying degrees, being internationalised. International negotiations and participation in supranational preparatory and administrative bodies are becoming a normal part of the working of public administration. Community law is developing into a major source of legislative norms and standards. The administrative authorities are also being forced to adapt to requirements on individual freedom of choice and this means that flexibility and openness are becoming important commitments. Individual authorities are being given greater freedom of action within the limits of the general framework

laid down by the Riksdag and the Government. The debate going on throughout Europe on the principle of subsidiarity can be seen as forming part of the general trend towards decentralisation.

The Legal System

As in every state subject to the rule of law justice is administered by independent courts. The concept of legality has ancient roots in Sweden. On Law shall the Land be built was the principle inherited from the Middle Ages. The courts are free from political interference so as to safeguard the independence of the judiciary. A characteristic feature of the Swedish legal system is a binary system of law-courts; the courts of administration play a key role in providing justice for citizens in relation to the public authorities. Sweden lacks a constitutional court and the Supreme Court has little political significance.

The Swedish system of justice is currently subject to a far-reaching process of adaptation to the internationalisation of legal systems. International conventions and European Union law are being introduced as complementary, and in some cases superior, sources of law. The increased emphasis on individual rights and freedoms is also making new demands on the courts.

Local Government

In Sweden local government authorities are responsible for an unusually large part of public administration. The tradition of local government is still strongly alive. Citizens elect their own deliberative assemblies within the county and local councils. The state sets out a framework for local government, within which the county councils and municipal authorities make their own decision.

Aspects of internationalisation affecting local and county authorities include organised cross-border regional cooperation within the Nordic countries as well as among the states of the Baltic region. Having to adapt to European rules for competitiveness is forcing a change of the rules in the purchasing of the local and county councils. The executive bodies at local government level are affected to an ever greater degree by decisions reached by European agencies. Local and county councils have

therefore sought to strengthen their coordination and lobbying activities at the European level. At the same time the internal management structures of local and county councils are being transformed. The general trend is towards freer forms of operation and in some cases even towards privatisation. As a result the scope for the freedom of choice of the individual citizen is being widened.

The Political Parties

Swedish political parties have evolved to a particularly high degree around socio-economic interests; ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional cleavages have played a subordinate role in this regard. For many years the Swedish party system was characterised both by a large measure of stability and the dominant role of the Social Democrats.

An inevitable consequence of the political integration of Europe is that the political parties are also being internationalised. The collaboration between European sister parties is taking on more permanent form. At the same time the power of the established parties is being threatened by the increased volatility of the electorate and the advent of newly-formed parties.

Voluntary organisations

Swedish democracy is based on the organisation of citizens in voluntary associations. The broadly-based social movements have been described as the cornerstone in the the edifice of Swedish society. The major social movements and the high level of recruitment and considerable influence enjoyed by the trade union organisations are distinguishing features of Swedish society. The organisations have also been given official duties to perform. In consequence Swedish democracy has developed a collectivist rather than an individualist orientation.

The organisations are also being internationalised. A global civil society is being formed by the increasing number of voluntary organisations that have the whole world as their field of operations. The traditional organisations have intensified their cooperative efforts across national boundaries. The internationalisation of the political decision-making process means that various special interests have to avail themselves of methods of influence that operate outside the boundaries of

their own countries; transnational lobbying is one example of this phenomenon. The established organisations are being further challenged by individualisation in the form of wavering loyalties and a weakened sense of belonging to organised collectives. In the field of labour law the more individually-oriented tradition of continental European legal norms is bringing about a re-evaluation of the more collectivist regulatory system of the "Nordic Model".

The Mass Media

Since democracy requires public debate in order to function properly, the principle of the free formation of public opinion is absolutely fundamental. The constitutional statutes guarantee the freedom of the press, freedom of expression and the principle of publicity which is so vital to the formation of public opinion in Sweden. The mass media are protected against intervention by the public authorities.

The mass media have much the same structure as they do in the rest of western Europe, although Sweden is singled out by its very high level of consumption of daily newspapers, the presence of a party press and the late introduction of commercial television.

In relation to the mass media, internationalisation can be seen in terms of the rapid spread to various parts of the world of the latest utterances of a global mass culture. Developments in electronics and in computer and communications technology are leading to new forms of mass media and as a result to new possibilities of communication between individuals and groups and between the governing and the governed. While the media landscape in a particular country could previously be dominated by one or two mass media institutions, change has meant that the media are being split up among an increasing number of transmitters and channels. To the extent that the operation of the mass media serves to create feelings of identity, the nationally-based political culture will have to face increasingly powerful competition from the process of internationalisation and an ever growing number of sub-cultures.

The Business World

Although the economic system is not regulated by the constitution, the market economy has always been a fundamental feature of the mixed

economy in Sweden with its combination of largely privately-owned industry and a comprehensive welfare system. The Instrument of Government has been altered so as to include formally rights that already exist in practice, namely the right of ownership and the freedom of trade. Swedish trade and industry are characterised by the prevalence of privately-owned, export-oriented major companies which makes for a very considerable degree of dependence on international markets.

Major Swedish companies are shifting an increasing share of their activities to other countries. Deregulation within various markets means greater competition, particularly from foreign companies. Individualisation can be seen in the form of a greater consumer awareness which has led to increased demands being made on individual companies.

The Monarchy

Sweden is a monarchy and the king is the Head of State. Nowadays, however, the king has no political power but only ceremonial duties. Despite the fact that the largest political party, the Social Democrats, still retains a commitment to the introduction of a republic in its party manifesto, the role of the monarchy is hardly ever challenged any more.

The Church of Sweden

For historical reasons the Church of Sweden enjoys a special status and has organisational links with the state. Unless a citizen specifically asks to leave the Church of Sweden, that individual automatically becomes a member of the Church.

The Church of Sweden used to function in a society with a single major religious tradition. Currently this state of affairs is being radically altered by immigration and the transformation of Sweden into a multi-cultural society. Greater emphasis on the rights and freedoms of the individual and on the freedom of worship in particular is increasingly bringing into question the whole system of a state church which has been the subject of so much discussion over so many years.

6 Parliament

The origins of Swedish democracy can be traced as far back as the *Things* and the diets of the nobility held during the Middle Ages. Although an exact date is impossible to establish, it was in the course of the fifteenth century that a national representative assembly based on four estates gradually evolved. This parliament or diet of the Estates, known in Swedish like its modern counterpart as the Riksdag, became a permanent feature of political life with the development of Sweden into a nation state during the sixteenth century. The degree of power enjoyed by the Riksdag was, however, to vary enormously depending on the structure of power relations obtaining at any given time. During periods of royal power the influence of the Riksdag was small; this was especially true during the Caroline Autocracy 1680–1718 and the Gustavian Autocracy 1772–1809. And yet between these two periods there were some fifty years when the Riksdag was exceptionally powerful. This intervening period, the Age of Liberty, is rightly known as the age of the Rule of the Estates. When the Riksdag of the Four Estates was abolished in 1866, Sweden acquired a bicameral parliament. The number of members was subsequently modified and from the end of the century there were 150 members of the Upper House and 230 in the Lower House. The Upper House was elected by indirect means; its members were appointed by the town and county councils. The members of the Lower House were directly elected by those voters with the franchise. From 1921 the electoral term for the Upper House was for eight years and for the Lower House it was first for three years and then for four.

The introduction of the unicameral Riksdag inaugurated in 1971 was accompanied by a number of new features, mainly in relation to the

abolition of the Upper House and the reorganisation of the parliamentary committees, although a degree of continuity was maintained in the working methods of the Riksdag. The parliamentary year kept to its old rhythm. Members continued to be seated according to their constituency. Although the structure of the parliamentary committees was altered, their prominent role remained unchanged. The style of debate, the interpellations and parliamentary questions of the unicameral Riksdag remained the same as in the bicameral system.

The introduction of a new electoral system and a unicameral parliament in time for the general election of 1970 saw membership of the Riksdag set at 350. To avoid a tied result the number was reduced to 349 in the new Instrument of Government which had its first reading in the spring of 1973. Nevertheless the result of the general election already scheduled for 1973 and to be the last with 350 members was that both of the political blocs won exactly the same number of seats.

There are other European states with larger parliaments, but in relation to the size of the population Sweden has a disproportionately large parliament. One of the reasons for this was to ensure that the sparsely-populated constituencies in Northern Sweden would be adequately represented. Another significant factor was that the previous bicameral parliament had had slightly more than 380 members. A more radically reduced number of parliamentary seats would have meant that quite a few parliamentarians would have lost their seats.

The average member of parliament sits for some 10 years, or just over three terms of office. After each general election one fifth of the Riksdag are new members.

Electoral System

The electoral system is designed to meet three principal requirements. The electoral system must be proportional in the sense that there should be a good agreement between the number of votes cast for a party nationwide and their share of the seats in parliament. The electoral system should also provide an adequate level of regional representation in the Riksdag. The final principle is that the goal of proportionality should not be implemented so exhaustively that other important aspects of political life are put at risk. Special emphasis is given to the risk of the major political parties splitting into smaller parties. As a result the

electoral system contains barriers against small parties and there are additional features designed to discourage party splits.

The Right to Vote

According to the current provisions, the right to vote is enjoyed by all Swedish citizens. The minimum voting age is set at 18 years, with age on the day of the election the deciding factor.

The Term of Office

Parliamentary elections have been held as scheduled every three years between 1970 and 1994. Since the brevity of the electoral terms is believed to have contributed to the weakening of the executive power, the parties have agreed on a change to the constitution aimed at reintroducing the four year term of office. The next scheduled election will therefore be held in 1998.

The Government has the right to call elections ahead of schedule although the following election must take place as originally scheduled. An extra election was last held in 1958 in connection with the pensions dispute. The short electoral terms of the current system have tended to work against the holding of extra elections.

The Constituencies

Sweden is divided into constituencies for the elections to the Riksdag. The purpose of the division of the country into constituencies is to ensure adequate representation for all the parts of the country. With effect from the general elections of 1994 the country is divided into 29 constituencies. The largest constituency is the county of Stockholm (36 seats in 1994); the smallest the county of Gotland (2 seats). In the average constituency there are just over ten seats at stake.

The Allocation of Seats

The 349 Riksdag seats consist of 310 fixed constituency seats and 39 additional member or supplementary seats. The fixed constituency seats are allocated to constituencies in proportion to the total number of electors in each constituency.

There are two barriers in place to counteract splitting into small parties. Only a party that has gained at least four percent of the votes nationwide may take part in the allocation of seats. However, a party that has failed to obtain four percent of the votes throughout the country may be allocated constituency seats if that party has gained a minimum of twelve per cent of the votes cast in a single constituency – as yet, this has never occurred.

The fixed constituency seats are allocated in relation to the proportion of votes cast for each party in a constituency. The 39 supplementary seats are allocated to the parties so that the allocation of seats for the country as a whole is in proportion to the votes cast for each party nationwide. A proportional method (the modified Saint-Lagüe system) is used for the distribution of seats with the first divisor set at 1.4. The allocation of the supplementary seats tends to favour those smaller parties that have crossed the four per cent hurdle but whose votes in individual constituencies have failed to win them any seats (see Appendix 2).

The Election of Individual Candidates

Hitherto the electoral system has provided comparatively little scope for the election of individuals. The order in which the candidates are ranked on the party list is decided by the parties in the course of their internal nomination procedures and has almost always determined which candidates win seats in the Riksdag.

The election of individual candidates is now to take on greater significance. The voters will be given the opportunity to tick the name of a candidate who will, as a result, be placed at the head of the list. This innovation will be introduced for all three elections in 1998 and was the subject of an experiment conducted in seven municipalities in the municipal elections of 1994. The experiment showed that roughly a quarter of voters chose to cast a preference vote. Only in the odd isolated case did this lead to the election of candidates in conflict with the order nominated by the political parties.

Eligibility for Office

The conditions of eligibility are nowadays identical with those for the franchise. In consequence, Swedish citizens who have reached the age of 18 on election day may stand for election to the Riksdag.

Popular Referenda

The electoral system is not designed to ensure that the view of a majority of the electorate will also be supported by a majority in the Riksdag on every particular issue. In some cases therefore it may be necessary to allow the voters to express their opinions directly. There are two kinds of popular referenda in Sweden, binding referenda on constitutional issues and consultative referenda. Hitherto no referendum on a change to the constitution has ever been held. Consultative referenda have been held on four occasions: on the prohibition of alcohol in 1922, on driving on the left in 1955, on the supplementary pension scheme (ATP) in 1957 and on nuclear power in 1980 (see Appendix 4). A common feature of the referenda of 1957 and 1980 was that the political parties campaigned vigorously to get their voters to vote for the proposal each party supported. In the pension referendum 80 percent of the voters followed their party line, while the remaining 20 percent either supported the proposal of another party or abstained. Party loyalty was weaker at the referendum on nuclear power when only 70 per cent voted for the proposal adopted by their particular party. A referendum on Swedish membership of the European Union is to be held in November 1994.

The Representativeness of the Riksdag

The Riksdag can hardly be said to be representative in social terms. Its members differ in a number of ways from their electors. There is an over-representation among members of the Riksdag of men, the middle-aged, the middle class, public sector employees, graduates, owner-occupiers and of people with religious convictions. Conversely, in proportion to the electorate there are too few women, young people, old people, workers, private sector employees, the less well-educated, tenants and the agnostic.

These deficiencies in the degree of social representativeness are not unique to the Swedish parliament. The social bias of parliaments may vary over time and between countries. The proportion of women politicians is a case in point. At the beginning of the century there were only a very few women in the Riksdag. It was not until the 1950s that the proportion of women in the Riksdag rose above ten per cent. As a result

of vigorous campaigning more women were nominated to “safe” seats during the 1970s and after the elections of 1979 just over a quarter of the members of the Riksdag were women. Although the election of 1991 brought with it a reduction in the number of women parliamentarians, the general election of 1994 witnessed a further increase. The proportion of women in the Riksdag is now 40 per cent, which is the highest level of representation by women ever reached in any parliamentary election.

In terms of the occupational profile of its members the Riksdag has changed to a considerable extent as well. It is hardly surprising that social change has also affected members of parliament. The shrinking role of agriculture in providing employment is clearly reflected in the composition of the Riksdag. At the beginning of the century four out of every ten parliamentarians were farmers but this proportion has gradually diminished since that time. Despite these changes the Riksdag does not seem to have become less exclusive in social terms since the advent of democracy.

One group that has increased its representation in parliament is that of the professional politicians. This category includes party officials and those appointed to political posts. The presence of professional politicians of this kind is a reflection of what has become a normal career path into parliament. Nowadays it is extremely unusual for anyone to be elected to the Riksdag who has not previously held a political appointment in their party for several years. The average age of members of the Riksdag is just over 50. Thirteen per cent of members are younger than 40.

The Role of the Riksdag

According to the Instrument of Government the Riksdag has four main duties. These responsibilities are not unique to the Swedish parliament but common to the elected assemblies of most other parliamentary democracies.

One fundamental duty is that of legislation. The main principle of a democracy is that the fundamental legal norms of society are determined by the elected representatives of the people. It is the Riksdag, therefore, that determines the constitution of the country, the criminal code, family law, civil law and other statutes that affect the status of the individual. Within certain limits the Riksdag may transfer its legislative powers to the Government; this applies mainly to provisions on the implementation in detail of legislation formulated in general terms.

Another important duty is that of financial control – deciding the revenue and expenditure of the state. The European parliaments originally developed as a means for the various monarchies to convince their mostly recalcitrant subjects that they should contribute to the rising costs of war and the administration through taxation. The legitimacy of the Riksdag is still based on the notion of the people's power of assent to taxation although nowadays the relationship between parliament and the power of taxation has been reversed. It used to be the executive which tried to persuade the legislature to accept rises in taxation. But latterly it has been the Riksdag that has campaigned for rises in public expenditure largely as a result of the influence of various pressure groups, while the Government has been attempting to implement policies of fiscal restraint.

The third primary responsibility of the Riksdag is that of scrutinising the workings of government and the administration. The principle of parliamentary government means that the Government must enjoy the confidence of the Riksdag in order to govern the country. It also means that the Riksdag is duty bound to scrutinise the executive power and can bring down the Government by passing a vote of no confidence. The Riksdag has several methods at its disposal for keeping a check on the executive: by interpellations and parliamentary questions to ministers, for example, and through the scrutiny exercised by the Constitutional Committee over the members of the Cabinet as well as the monitoring of the public administration carried out by the Parliamentary Auditors.

The Riksdag also plays a role in foreign affairs. The more important international agreements must be approved by the Riksdag. Through its representatives on the Foreign Affairs Advisory Committee the Riksdag is able to put forward its views on the Government's conduct of foreign policy.

Parliamentary Procedures

A set procedure is followed when the Riksdag is to decide a legislative matter. The motion may be put either by the Government in the form of a government Bill, or by members of the Riksdag when it is known as a private member's motion. Proposals may also be put by other bodies within the Riksdag on certain kinds of legislative matters.

Proposed legislation is normally moved in the form of a government Bill. The first part of a government Bill, which may run to several

hundred pages on issues of major importance, is a formal Government decision to move the Bill in the Riksdag, a summary of the main contents of the Bill, the presentation of the motion to the Riksdag and the legal text of the proposed legislation. The main body of the text deals with an explanation of the reasons behind the proposal and its background. The Government usually moves 200 Bills in each session. The most important and the largest of these motions is the Finance Act (the Budget Bill) which is presented to the Riksdag each year in January.

Individual members of parliament have two principal means of presenting motions for decision. A motion on any subject may be moved within fifteen days of the presentation of the Finance Act. During the general period for private members' motions in January more than 2,000 motions are presented. Any member of the Riksdag is also entitled to move a motion in connection with a Bill. A consequential motion of this kind must be connected with the subject of the Bill. In comparison with the parliaments of many European countries, the rights of Swedish MPs to make private members' motions are extensive.

The fact that preparation of the business of the Riksdag is obligatory means that neither government Bills nor private members' motions can be moved immediately in the Chamber. A matter must first be tabled; this is normally a pure formality and not subject to debate. All Bills and motions are referred to committees for consideration. The committee submits its recommendations and its reasons in a report. The minority of the committee normally formulate their proposals in the form of reservations to the majority report. In order to provide a few days for its reading, the report lies on the table of the Chamber before it is debated and voted on.

The Plenary Session

The Chamber is the term used to describe the Riksdag when it meets in plenary session. The party leaders take part in major debates. In other matters the parties are usually represented by their spokesmen on the committee concerned. As a rule the opposition parties introduce a debate. Any member attacked in a debate has the right of reply. Since the parties have already adopted their positions during the committee stage, the debate in the Chamber normally plays no role in the outcome of the issue. The debate is primarily a repetition of the main arguments.

The debate in Chamber is normally open to the public. However, the Riksdag may hold debates behind closed doors by invoking the safety of the realm or the need to maintain official secrecy. This option was made use of during the Second World War.

The Riksdag is also entitled to hold specially arranged debates on current issues without a vote taking place. Debates of this kind are usually held a couple of times a year and the subjects dealt with have included poverty issues, the economy, nuclear power, European issues and the internal procedures of the Riksdag.

Voting

After an issue has been debated the Riksdag decides on the various motions that have been put forward in the course of the debate. If possible the matter is decided by acclamation; the Speaker asks for members to vote yes to the committee's proposals. Any member may call for a vote before the fall of the Speaker's gavel. Initially a vote is taken by having members rise in their seats. If the result is unclear or if a member calls for a count to be held, a new round of voting takes place using the electronic vote-recording equipment. Members can vote yes or no, or register an abstention.

If there are only two proposals before the Chamber the vote is a straightforward matter; the plurality decides. The procedure is more complicated if there are three or more proposals. The parliaments of different countries use various methods to determine voting procedure. The two most common methods are by succession and by amendment. Sweden, like many countries influenced by the British system, uses the amendment system. Under this method the vote is between two proposals (proposal and counter-proposal), after which the winning proposal is opposed to a new counter-proposal and so on until only two proposals remain. The sequence of the proposals may determine the outcome of the final vote. The rule in the Swedish parliament is that the proposal of the majority on the committee enjoys the advantage of being the main proposal for the final vote.

Once the vote has been taken in the Riksdag, its decision is communicated to the Government in a brief and formal written statement.

Legislation

Even though the Riksdag is usually referred to as the legislative branch of central government, the role played by the Riksdag is confined to the final stage of a long legislative process. In practice the preparatory work and the drafting of the legal text takes place in the government ministries. In consequence a government Bill is the most extensive document to be found in the entire legislative process. Legislative proposals may also originate in the report of an official commission of inquiry which will usually have been subject to the referral process. It may also have been reviewed by the Council of Legislation which is composed of senior jurists. In the Riksdag this material may be complemented by consequential motions, committee reports and a debate in the Chamber. Some of these preparatory stages may subsequently be of importance as legal sources in the implementation of the law.

Normally the Riksdag makes decisions on legislative matters by a simple majority. A special procedure applies, however, to the passing of certain kinds of law.

Amendments to the Fundamental Laws of the Constitution

Fundamental laws are adopted by the passage of two decisions of identical wording in the Riksdag with an intervening general election. The idea is to prevent constitutional change occurring overnight. Most other democracies have similar provisions to make it more difficult to change constitutional laws than other laws.

The Instrument of Government also stipulates that the first decision on an amendment to a fundamental law must be made at least nine months before the general election. The Constitutional Committee may, however, by a five-sixths majority authorise an exception to this rule.

A pending proposal for a constitutional amendment, ie one suspended until the second decision after a general election, may be made the subject of a popular referendum. A motion to this effect may be made by a minimum of one tenth of the members of the Riksdag (ie 35 members) and must be supported by at least a third of the members (ie 117 members). The referendum must be held simultaneously with the general election. The electorate are entitled to vote yes or no to the suspended amendment to the constitution. The amendment is rejected if

the majority of those taking part in the referendum vote against it and if their number is greater than half the number of those who registered valid votes at the election. The referendum is thus negatively binding. Should the electorate vote in favour of the amendment, the newly-elected Riksdag may either adopt or reject the amendment to the fundamental law. The option of holding a referendum on constitutional issues was introduced in 1980 but has as yet not been used.

Legislation to Restrict Rights and Freedoms

Some of the rights and freedoms enumerated in the Instrument of Government are absolute while others may be restricted by legislation. The attendant risk that rights and freedoms may be diluted as a result has been justified in that legislation to limit rights and freedoms is itself subject to a number of restrictions.

Firstly, legislation of this kind may be enacted “only to achieve a purpose acceptable to a democratic society”. The restriction may not exceed what is necessary for the purpose it is intended to achieve nor may it extend so far as to constitute a threat to the free formation of public opinion. The restriction may not be made solely on grounds of political, religious, cultural or other such views.

Ten members of the Riksdag are entitled to demand that a law restricting rights be held in suspension for twelve months. A qualified majority of five sixths of the Riksdag may, however, authorise the taking of a decision on the law with immediate effect.

The Budgetary Process

The Finance Act contains the Government’s proposals on the revenue and expenditure of the state. The major part of the Finance Act is made up of some twenty or more appendices. Each government ministry describes the aims of its departmental expenditure. The Government’s overall assessment of the economic situation is presented in the Financial Plan which also includes a national budget.

The financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June (from 1 January to 31 December – with effect from 1997). The Budget proposed by the Government to the Riksdag for 1993/94 amounted to just over 500 billion

SEK. The largest source of revenue was made up of indirect taxes, primarily value added tax. Income taxes and national insurance contributions (which in 1993 amounted to 31 per cent of wages) accounted for a third of government revenue. This revenue is, however, insufficient to meet the costs of public expenditure. The deficit has to be made up by loans. The largest item of expenditure consists of transfer payments, ie transfers mainly to domestic households (pensions, child allowance, sickness benefit, early retirement pensions, unemployment benefit etc.), to local authorities and for housing. Public consumption includes wages and other expenditure on the judicial system, the police, the national insurance system, defence and higher education. The major part of public investment is devoted to roads and railways. Currently the interest repayments on the national debt constitute a major and growing item of expenditure.

The presentation of these overall figures would tend to mask what is actually a long drawn-out budgetary process. Under the procedure operating hitherto the public authorities have calculated their estimated appropriations on the basis of the Government's general economic targets. The estimates have been compiled by the government ministries concerned. The main task of the Finance Ministry has been to restrain the demands on expenditure made by the high-spending ministries. The Riksdag has dealt with the Finance Act during the spring. Extra demands for expenditure have frequently been made during the passage of the Bill through parliament. The Riksdag voted on the various parts of the Budget, in turn, but has not made a decision on the Budget in its entirety. Criticism of the current budgetary process has been aimed both at the structure of the budget and at the decision-making process itself. The Finance Act has a number of shortcomings: in some respects the estimates are extremely detailed while in others the accounting is summary and incomplete. The problem with the decision-making process is that it is easier to decide on increases in expenditure than on increased taxation or cuts to expenditure. The large budget deficit can be explained in part by a lack of stringency in the budgetary process. It has proved easier for high-spending special interests to influence the Riksdag than for the common interest in ensuring the sound financial status of the national budget.

A new budgetary procedure is now being introduced. The Budget will be more transparent and submitted in one document. The Riksdag will decide on the Budget in two stages. The first decision will relate to the

overall budget parameters to be observed by the committees of the Riksdag. The Riksdag allocates expenditure to some two dozen spending areas. The second decision will relate to the allocation within these spending areas. The committees can make different priorities within these parameters but cannot exceed the total amount allocated. In addition the budgetary procedure of the Riksdag will work more swiftly. The aim is to tighten the control over the expenditure of the state and in so doing help to get to grips with the huge budget deficit.

Interpellations and Parliamentary Questions

An important aspect of the Riksdag's power of scrutiny is embodied in the power of its members to put questions to Cabinet ministers. The Swedish parliament has two forms of question at its disposal: the interpellation and the parliamentary question.

Interpellations are more detailed and other members of the Riksdag in addition to the Minister and the interpellants may take part in the ensuing debate. A parliamentary question is shorter and only the Minister and the member asking the question may take part in the debate.

The formula for parliamentary question time has been modified on several occasions so as to ensure a more lively debate. The pace is, however, still far from lively. Swedish Cabinet ministers have yet to reach the point at which they would feel able to respond spontaneously to questions. Members' questions must be submitted in written form several days in advance.

Interpellations and questions must relate to the Government's handling of an issue and the position it adopts in relation to the matter. The debate may not directly relate to a decision of the courts or of a public authority. However, a member of the Riksdag may refer to an individual by asking, for example, whether the Minister is prepared to propose an amendment to legislation in the matter.

The Parliamentary Year

The parliamentary year follows a set pattern. The parliamentary session is opened by the sovereign in October. The Prime Minister then reads out the Statement of Government Policy. A few weeks after the opening of the parliamentary session a general debate on home affairs is held. The autumn business of the Riksdag ends with a debate on economic policy and a debate between the party leaders. Hitherto the Finance Act has set its stamp on the Riksdag's spring business. With the realignment of the budgetary year to the calendar year it will in future be the autumn that is dominated by the budgetary process. The Constitutional Committee holds public enquiries during March and April as part of its scrutiny of the performance of their official duties by Ministers. The workload is usually at its greatest in the weeks prior to the summer recess when the Riksdag has to vote on a whole range of Bills on various matters.

Even though the Riksdag is not normally in session during the summer, a certain amount of business continues to be carried out in committee. The official journeys of the committees are usually made during this time.

The statistics on parliamentary business suggest that the workload has become considerable. Some 3,000 motions are moved annually. There are more than 1,000 interpellations and parliamentary questions. The committees produce a total of 500 reports, containing more than a thousand minority reports. Every year around a thousand matters are voted on. Of necessity the handling of numerous matters has become summary.

The Committees

The committees are of great importance to the Riksdag. The obligation to prepare parliamentary business means that all legislative matters must be referred to committees. The committees serve as a forum for achieving compromises and agreements particularly during periods when the Government does not enjoy a majority of its own in the Riksdag.

Since the inauguration of the unicameral Riksdag in 1971, the business of its 16 standing committees has been divided into specialist areas. The Riksdag is also free to set up additional committees. A special EEA-committee was appointed in 1992. In terms of the power they wield, the committees enjoy an equivalent status. The reform of the budgetary procedure will give the Financial Committee a superior status on economic issues.

Each committee has 17 members, who are appointed in proportion to the strength of the parties. After the general election in 1994 all the committees have Socialist majorities. By tradition the opposition parties appoint the chair on half of the committees.

The committees have to decide how to respond both to government Bills and to private members' motions. Each committee has the option of asking other committees, the Council of Legislation, public authorities, interest organisations and experts for their opinions. A minority of at least five members of the committee can request that the committee should seek opinions of this kind; the majority on the committee can only deny such a request if the time involved would cause considerable practical problems.

The sessions of the committee are held behind closed doors. Nowadays the committees have the option of holding public hearings. The live transmission of the hearings of the Constitutional Committee has attracted considerable public interest.

Party Groups

Despite increased political mobility party discipline in the Swedish parliament remains at a very high level. It is a rare occurrence indeed that a party member diverges from the party line in votes of major importance.

The role played by the parties' parliamentary groups is of considerable significance in maintaining the internal discipline of the parties. The introduction of proportional representation at the beginning of the century meant that members were elected on party lists. This strengthened the organisation of the Riksdag along party lines. The parliamentary party groups have become increasingly institutionalised. Special regulations and decision-making procedures apply to the running of the parliamentary groups. All the party groups elect a management committee of their own. In several parties the party leader is the chairman of the parliamentary group. In every party there is a Riksdag member who has been appointed leader of the parliamentary group; this party whip plays a crucial role in parliamentary life.

Each party group has a parliamentary office of its own. This parliamentary party secretariat is of greatest significance for the opposition parties. With a change of government a considerable number of Under-Secretaries of State and political advisers are recruited to the government ministries from the parliamentary party secretariats.

All the party groups in the Riksdag receive a basic stipend plus an allowance for each member. Stipends are also given for secretarial help to each member. Financial support for the parliamentary parties amounted in 1991/2 to 59 million SEK. The parliamentary party secretariats are also indirectly subsidised in the form of office premises and technical support provided in the Riksdag building.

It should also be pointed out that although party discipline is strong it is not absolute. During the 1991–1994 parliament a couple of Riksdag members from the smaller parties left their parties, although they have remained in parliament as political wildcards.

Other Parliamentary Agencies

There are several other authorities directly subordinate to the Riksdag: the Bank of Sweden, the Parliamentary Ombudsmen, the Auditors of the Riksdag and various international delegations.

The Bank of Sweden

The Bank of Sweden is the national central bank with responsibility for currency and credit policy. It is also responsible for ensuring a sound and efficient payments system. Only the Bank of Sweden is authorised to issue banknotes and coins.

The Bank is administered by eight trustees. Seven of these are elected by the Riksdag and they appoint a chairman from among their number. These seven trustees appoint an additional trustee to serve as Governor of the Bank for a period of five years.

The Governor of the Bank can only be dismissed by the trustees of the Bank. The Riksdag may dismiss a trustee when making its annual decision on the discharge of the Bank's responsibilities.

The status of the central bank has been the subject of discussion in Sweden as it has in other countries. The particular view taken of the role of the central bank is closely linked with the choice of economic policy. Those who give priority to the fight against inflation and want to see a stable currency policy are also willing to make the central bank largely independent.

The Bank of Sweden already enjoys a large measure of independence in relation to the Government. A committee proposal made in the spring of 1993 would also give the Bank greater independence in relation to the Riksdag. The Social Democrats and the trade union movement are, however, opposed to this measure.

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen

The office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman was introduced in the Instrument of Government of 1809. It is the responsibility of the Ombudsman to scrutinise the implementation of laws and other statutes.

Currently there are four Parliamentary Ombudsmen, one of whom is the administrative director. The Ombudsmen are appointed by the Riksdag. At the request of the Constitutional Committee, the Riksdag may relieve an Ombudsman of his mandate.

The Ombudsmen may investigate matters both on their own initiative and after complaints from the public. The Ombudsmen may attend the deliberations of the law courts and the administrative agencies and has full access to the records and official documents of public authorities. Central and local government officials are obliged to disclose informa-

tion to the Ombudsmen. If the Ombudsman finds that an offence has been committed, the result is usually the issuing of a memorandum. The Ombudsman also has the right to initiate a prosecution against public officials or to demand that the person in question be disciplined.

The Parliamentary Ombudsmen provide the Riksdag with an annual report on their official duties. As is the case with the duties of the Bank of Sweden, the business of the Ombudsmen is kept separate for all practical purposes from the day to day business of the Riksdag.

The Auditors of the Riksdag

The Riksdag appoints auditors from among its members to examine the activities of the state. The Riksdag may also decide that the auditors' examination be extended to other areas of activity. The Riksdag has the right to demand whatever documentation is necessary for their audit.

There are twelve Riksdag Auditors. Although they have an office, its resources cannot compare with the auditing resources available to the Government through the National Audit Bureau and the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development.

The Riksdag Auditors embody the power of scrutiny of the Riksdag. Proposals to extend the scope of the scrutinising activities of the Riksdag tend therefore to be made in the form of calls for greater resources for the Riksdag Auditors.

The European Delegations

The Swedish Delegations to the Council of Europe and to the Parliamentary Committee of the European Free Trade Association are appointed by the Riksdag. The Riksdag also elects from its number the Swedish members of a Joint Parliamentary Committee for the European Parliament and EFTA which has been set up under the EEA-Treaty. Since 1992 there has also been a coordinating body for relations between the Riksdag and the European Parliament. This EU-Delegation consists of 18 members from the Riksdag and the same number from the European Parliament. The Riksdag is setting up an international office in 1994 to administer the increasing number of contacts it maintains with foreign bodies.

The Foreign Affairs Advisory Council

According to the Instrument of Government the Government must keep the Foreign Affairs Advisory Council informed of foreign policy issues which may be of importance to the realm. The Government must consult the Council on all major foreign policy decisions. This gives the opposition parties an opportunity to gain insight into and influence over the conduct of foreign policy. The idea is that policies affecting Sweden's relations with other countries should be as broadly based as possible in domestic political terms.

The Foreign Affairs Advisory Council consists of the Speaker and nine other members elected by the Riksdag from among its members. The chairman is the head of state. Only representatives of the major parties are made members of the Council. The members of the Foreign Affairs Advisory Council are bound to observe an oath of secrecy.

Swedish membership of the EU would require new forms of participation by the Riksdag in the decision-making process. The boundary between foreign and domestic policy is becoming increasingly fluid. The setting up of a European Affairs Advisory Council has been proposed to sit in parallel with the Foreign Affairs Advisory Council.

The War Delegation

If the country is at war or if there is a threat of war the functions of the Riksdag may be taken over by a smaller assembly. The War Delegation of the Riksdag is presided over by the Speaker and made up of fifty other members of the Riksdag.

The Powers of the Riksdag

The degree of parliamentary support for the Government is the single most important factor determining the influence of the Riksdag on the political decision-making process. During a period of majority government, when the Government can rely on a stable majority in the Riksdag, the Government has considerable freedom of manoeuvre. The role of the Riksdag in these circumstances is simply to ratify Government decisions. If, on the other hand, the Government is only supported by a minority in parliament, the importance of the Riksdag increases. The

Government has to seek the support of one or more parties outside the Government. In this situation it is the Riksdag and its committees in particular which become the forum in which compromises and agreements are reached. The power of the Riksdag to move a motion of no confidence remains a Sword of Damocles hanging over the Government.

Legislation

The experience of the minority parliamentary governments that have largely characterised Sweden since the beginning of the 1970s makes clear that on many issues the Riksdag has been able to influence the passage of a large number of government Bills. Governments have been forced to alter their proposals so as to win a majority in the Riksdag. Unofficial contacts between the Government ministries and the committees of the Riksdag are an important means for putting together a majority. On weightier political issues negotiations of this kind may take place between the party leaders. It is the party leaders who usually attempt to find support from their own backbenchers for any agreements reached.

Budgetary Decisions

Seen in terms of the overall figures the Government's budgetary Bills usually pass through the Riksdag without any great changes being made. However, in a considerable number of specific subordinate areas the Riksdag's handling of the bill involves making changes to the Finance Act. The contribution made by the Riksdag is frequently to raise expenditure levels. The introduction of a new budgetary procedure is aimed at ensuring that in future the Riksdag will devote itself less with the details and more to the state finances considered as a whole.

Several major decisions on the finances of the state have been made outside the Riksdag. The crisis agreements of 1992 provide one example. Faced with the threat of a currency crisis the Government and the opposition Social Democrats agreed on savings in expenditure and a restructuring of the social insurance system. The role of the Riksdag was simply to confirm the agreement after the event.

Scrutiny

The Riksdag has several methods at its disposal for the scrutiny of Government business.

Vigorous use is made of parliamentary questions and interpellations to call members of the Cabinet to account. Many of the issues raised are brought to light by the mass media. The institution of parliamentary questions provides members of the Riksdag with an opportunity to attract attention by challenging a Minister on a particular current issue. Preparing ministerial answers to questions of this kind takes up a considerable part of the ministries' time. Given the lack of research it is difficult to assess the real effect of interpellations and parliamentary questions on the business of the Government.

The annual examination by the Constitutional Committee of ministerial performance of duties is exploited primarily by the opposition parties to "target" particular ministers. Cabinet ministers are often accused of practising "ministerial rule", ie to have intervened in the handling of particular matters which are in fact the province of an administrative agency or the law courts. For this reason attention tends to focus on a few highly publicised issues each year. The Constitutional Committee also carries out a degree of scrutiny of the internal organisation and the working methods of the government ministries.

Although the Riksdag auditors have, as previously mentioned, comparatively meagre resources, they have carried out a number of investigations into particular areas of the administration which have attracted considerable attention. The work of the Auditors is, however, not integrated to any great degree with the everyday business of the Riksdag.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy and diplomacy have traditionally been the preserve of King and Government. Only slowly and with difficulty has the Riksdag been able to assert its influence over foreign policy. The process of internationalisation of the economy and of politics means that the role played by the Riksdag on foreign policy issues is of increasing importance for the working of democratic government.

The effects of internationalisation are obvious in the work of the Riksdag. The proportion of committee reports containing an inter-

national dimension has increased continuously during recent decades. Foreign policy is no longer simply identical with traditional diplomacy. The international dimension is particularly noticeable in areas such as the environment, the economy, agriculture, the labour market, communications and energy policy. As a result the traditional areas of operation of the Riksdag such as legislation, budgetary matters and scrutiny are increasingly affected by international factors.

The decision to have Sweden become part of the European Economic Area was preceded by a protracted process of negotiation. The scale of the preparatory work involved in this matter led the Riksdag to appoint a special EEA-committee.

The Instrument of Government also specifies a number of special forms for the participation of the Riksdag in foreign policy: it requires the approval of the Riksdag for the more important international agreements, qualified majority voting for the transfer of the right of decision-making to international organisations and the appointment of the Foreign Affairs Advisory Council.

The Instrument of Government concedes that any right of decision-making directly based on the Instrument of Government may be entrusted "to a limited extent" to international organisations for peaceful cooperation or to an international court of law. A constitutional amendment proposed in relation to Swedish membership of the EU would repeal the words "to a limited extent". The right to make decisions on amendments to the constitution or other major changes to the polity may, however, not be delegated. A decision to delegate decision-making power can either take the same form as a constitutional amendment (by two identically worded decisions of the Riksdag with an intervening general election) or by a qualified majority vote (five sixths of the votes cast and three quarters of all the members of the Riksdag).

Since power is based on information, foreign affairs constitutes a special problem. A significant part of the material on which foreign policy decisions are based is confidential and covered by the Official Secrets Act under the heading of national security. This also sets limits to the scrutinising powers of the Riksdag. The parliamentary bodies with particular responsibility for foreign policy issues may, however, see the secret records from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on agreeing to observe official secrecy. In this way the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Advisory Council can be given a

greater measure of insight into foreign affairs than other members of the Riksdag.

There is nothing to suggest that the involvement of the Riksdag in foreign affairs has diminished. On the contrary, international issues are playing an ever greater role in the business of the Riksdag. This is not to say that the influence of the Riksdag has grown in real terms as the trend has been for international issues to gain in importance and complexity at the same time. The Riksdag has encountered problems in following and taking part in foreign policy developments. Informal means of decision-making are becoming more important and as a result the traditional methods of exercising the scrutiny of the Riksdag are becoming increasingly antiquated. Secret negotiations and informal networks of influence operating across national borders are reducing the supervisory capacities of parliaments. There is a growing tendency to delegate power to the Government and to public officials at national and international level.

7 The Government

The system of Cabinet government has its origins in the group of councillors who served as advisers to the medieval kings. In Sweden as in the rest of Europe, the king surrounded himself with high-ranking officials who were responsible for defence, diplomacy, justice and the exchequer. With the development of the state in an organised form at the dawn of the modern era, the division of labour was implemented with increasing thoroughness. The administration of central government was divided into collegiate bodies and administrative agencies.

It was at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century that the distinctive features of the Swedish civil service took shape. One of the collegiate bodies, the College of Chancery, was given superiority over the rest of the administration. During the eighteenth century this chancery was organised on a more permanent basis into departments which were the forerunners of today's government ministries.

The Instrument of Government drawn up in 1809 continued to stipulate that it was the king alone who had the power to rule the country. The monarch was, however, obliged to seek information and advice from his ministers. This meant that no Cabinet existed as such with its own sphere of power. The role of the minister was to inform, advise and carry out the king's wishes.

One of the consequences of the growth of opposition to royal power was that the role of the minister was strengthened. The chancery departments were transformed into ministries by a reform of 1840. The king's advisers thus became head of government departments and this gave them a stronger power base. It is worth pointing out that at that time the

Swedish term for a government minister or ministers (*statsråd*) was used in several senses and both as a term for the Council, the group of royal ministers, and for its individual members. It is in the latter sense that the word survives in Sweden as the term for the members of the Cabinet. The post of Prime Minister (*statsminister*) was introduced in 1876.

Conflict between the king and his ministers was to become increasingly acute and reached its height in the struggle for parliamentary government. The issue at stake was whether the Government was accountable to the monarch or to the Riksdag. For all practical purposes the power of the monarch over the government of the realm dissolved as the idea of parliamentary government gained ground at the beginning of the twentieth century, finally to triumph in 1917. The wording of the constitution, however, was to continue to refer to the sole rule of the king for another fifty years or so.

The historical development of the current form of Swedish government passed through four principal stages. During the Middle Ages it was the monarchy that governed the country. A formal division was then made between the chancery and the other civil service departments at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The reform of the administration into ministries provided government ministers with greater power. The monarch's role in government came to an end with the advent of parliamentary government.

The Struggle for Executive Power

The triumph of parliamentary government brought new problems in its wake. The Government lacked a stable basis in the Riksdag for a long period. The proportional electoral system made it easier to set up new parties. Party splits in the Riksdag made the formation of governments difficult. After 1917 there was a rapid succession of governments (see Appendix 3).

The period from 1920 until the beginning of the 1930s was one of minority government. Governments tried to gain the support of different parties for different policies, frequently after pacts had been reached on the Riksdag's committees. When these failed the Government would

be forced to resign. The consequence was a succession of government crises which made it difficult to implement consistent long-term policies.

The financial crisis and high unemployment made great demands on the efficacy of political measures. The Social Democrats won the election of 1932 but still lacked the support of a majority in the Riksdag. Once an agreement had been reached with the Agrarian League in 1933, the Social Democrats had sufficient support for their economic policies. In return the farmers managed to push through their demands, which included protective tariffs for agricultural products. The "horse-trading", as this pact is commonly known, laid the foundations for a tradition of collaboration in Swedish politics. The period of minority government was replaced by an era of more powerful Cabinets. The Social Democrats and the Agrarian League formed a coalition government after the election of 1936.

The Government enjoyed even broader support at the end of 1939. During the Second World War Sweden was ruled by a government of national unity made up of all the parties apart from the Communists.

When the war was over the differences of opinion between the parties were too great to allow the national unity government to continue in office. The Social Democrats remained in government on their own.

However, the Social Democrats lacked a majority and to provide the government with a stronger parliamentary platform a "red-green" coalition was once more agreed between the Social Democrats and the Agrarian League. In 1957 this ruling alliance broke down over differences on the supplementary pensions issue.

Subsequently the Social Democrats were to govern alone for a further two decades. Their Governments usually had the support of the Communists but they only enjoyed an absolute majority for the two years following their electoral triumph in 1968.

The Social Democrats were finally forced out of office in 1976. The three non-Socialist parties had a majority in the Riksdag and formed a coalition government which fell two years later because of a lack of agreement on the nuclear power issue. The problems the non-Socialist parties faced in working together can be illustrated by the fact that four different governments succeeded one another during the years of non-Socialist government between 1976 and 1982.

The general election of 1982 saw the start of a nine-year period of Social Democratic rule. Olof Palme was Prime Minister until his assassination in 1986 when he was succeeded by Ingvar Carlsson. Two factors

made the conduct of Government business difficult during this period. The Government lacked a majority of its own in the Riksdag and the Social Democrats and the trade unions could not agree on crucial aspects of economic policy.

It became obvious only a few months after the Palme Government took office in the autumn of 1982 that parliamentary government in Sweden had entered a new phase. The Left Communist Party made it clear that it would no longer refrain from allowing the Government to fall. Reference to a majority Socialist bloc was no longer tenable. The Social Democrats subsequently attempted to gain greater support for their proposals from the non-Socialist parties, especially from the Centre and Liberal parties.

The number of possible parliamentary combinations increased with the entry of the Greens into the Riksdag at the 1988 election. However, internal resistance to compromise policies meant that the Greens were unable to play a role of any importance in the parliamentary chess-game.

The problems faced by minority governments were clearly demonstrated by the government crisis of February 1990. In the course of the parliamentary debate on the Government's motion for a national wage freeze, Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson declared that the Government would resign if the motion was lost. A majority of the Riksdag voted against the Government's Bill and the Government duly resigned. The parties that had brought the Government down had, however, no wish to form a new Government of their own. The outcome of the government crisis was that the Riksdag once again accepted Ingvar Carlsson as the leader of a Social Democrat minority government.

Under the old five party system an election resulting in a Socialist minority automatically meant a majority for the non-Socialist parties. The advent of new minor parties has altered the political map. The Social Democrats suffered big losses at the elections in 1991 and Ingvar Carlsson resigned immediately. The incoming non-Socialist Government with Carl Bildt as Prime Minister was made up of four parties but lacked a majority of its own, nonetheless.

The problem faced by this Government was a dual one, how to keep together a coalition of four different parties and how to gain the assent of the Riksdag to the policies of the Government. On most of the decisive votes the New Democratic Party refrained from blocking the passage of the Government's proposals and in so doing saved the non-Socialist Government. On some crucial political issues the Government managed to reach agreement with the Social Democratic opposi-

tion. Two pacts of this kind were made during the height of the currency crisis in 1992.

The general election of 1994 resulted in a majority for the Socialist bloc and Prime Minister Bildt resigned. Ingvar Carlsson rejected the invitation of the Liberals to join a coalition and the Social Democrats formed a government on their own. Ingvar Carlsson declared that a Social Democratic government, albeit a minority one, was best placed to gain parliamentary support through collaboration with different parties on different issues.

A look back at the seventy years that have passed since the advent of democracy shows that the process of government formation has gone through a number of alternating phases. On average Sweden has changed government every third year.

The turnover in Prime Ministers was greatest during the period of minority government in the 1920s. However, the oft-mentioned 44 years of Social Democratic rule 1932–1976 were not as stable as all that. In the summer of 1936 the Social Democratic stranglehold on government was broken by a short-lived Agrarian League government. For nine years in total (1936–1939 and 1951–1957) the Social Democrats governed in coalition with the Agrarian League. For just over the five years that the Second World War lasted, executive power was shared between all the parties apart from the Communists. And even when the Social Democrats have ruled alone they have had to make pacts with other parties on a number of occasions to get their policies through. Examples of this kind of compromise are provided by the “horse-trading” with the Agrarian League in 1933, the Haga negotiations with the Liberals and the Centre Party 1974–1975, and above all by the period of Social Democrat minority rule in the 1980s.

Ever since the 1920s the division between Socialists and non-Socialists has been the most important cleavage in Swedish domestic politics. But history furnishes many examples of occasions on which this boundary between the blocs has been crossed.

Government Formation

The Government consists of the Prime Minister and the other ministers he appoints to his Cabinet. The Prime Minister is chosen by the Riksdag. It is the responsibility of the Speaker, after consulting with the party

leaders and the deputy speakers, to propose a candidate for Prime Minister. If more than half the members of the Riksdag vote against the proposal, it is rejected, otherwise it is approved. Abstentions are therefore deemed to be assenting passively to the prime ministerial candidate. Were the Speaker's candidate to be rejected, although this has in fact never occurred, the procedure would be repeated. New elections would be held if the Riksdag were to reject the proposals of the Speaker on four occasions.

Once the Riksdag has approved the candidacy of the new Prime Minister, the latter has to announce the names of his other ministers as soon as possible to the Riksdag. The actual transfer of government takes place at a special Cabinet meeting in the presence of the Head of State.

A new government is formed when the previous Prime Minister either resigns, dies or is dismissed by the Riksdag.

The Riksdag can call the Government to account by passing a motion of no confidence in a particular Cabinet minister or in the Prime Minister. In the latter case the entire Government must resign. A motion of no confidence must be moved by at least one tenth (ie 35) of the Riksdag's members. A no confidence motion needs the votes of more than half of the Riksdag to pass. Abstentions count in favour of the Government – as a form of passive support. This means that the Government can remain in office as long as 175 members do not vote against it.

The current provisions of the constitution on the formation of government have been implemented nine times. On five occasions a change of government has been brought about by the outcome of general elections (1976, 1979, 1982, 1991 and 1994). On two occasions governments have resigned because of internal dissension (1978 and 1981) and once because of the death of the Prime Minister (1986) and one government has resigned after failing to win a vote in the Riksdag (1990).

On three of the nine occasions the parliamentary situation has been obvious in the sense that in the course of the soundings taken prior to the formation no alternative government was conceivable nor was any other prime ministerial candidate. After the election of 1976 there was general agreement that the natural solution in parliamentary terms was for the three non-Socialist parties to form a government under the premiership of Thorbjörn Fälldin. In 1982 no one questioned that the Speaker was right to propose Olof Palme as the Social Democratic premier nor that Ingvar Carlsson should succeed Olof Palme as Prime Minister in 1986. On other occasions a fairly lengthy process of negotia-

tion and consultation preceded the Speaker's final proposal. After the resignation of the Carlsson Government in 1990 the Speaker invited Carl Bildt to look into the possibility of forming a three party non-Socialist government. It was only several days later, once Bildt had made clear that there was no possibility of forming a government of this kind, that Carlsson was invited to form a Social Democratic government once again.

In formal terms what the Riksdag votes on is the appointment of the Prime Minister; in real terms it decides which parties will form part of the government. The appointment of the other Cabinet ministers, however, is the duty of the Prime Minister.

A vital issue facing coalition governments is the distribution of the Cabinet posts among the political parties both in terms of how many Cabinet seats a particular party is allotted and which particular individuals are appointed. In practice the appointments are decided on the basis of negotiations between the party leaders of the coalition. In the four-party non-Socialist coalition formed in 1991 each party has the number of cabinet seats its strength in the Riksdag entitles it to.

During the last few decades there have been some 20 portfolios in the Cabinet. The number of government ministries has varied between 12 and 14. This means that only some members of the Cabinet head ministries of their own. The remaining Cabinet members have responsibility for specific issues. These issues may bridge the dividing-line between several different ministries but are frequently limited to a single departmental area. As a result of this arrangement the workload of a ministry may be shared between several ministers.

With the democratisation of executive power, experience in parliamentary and local government office has been the most important route to ministerial office. This form of political service has, however, never been an essential precondition for attaining Cabinet rank. Both Social Democratic and non-Socialist governments have brought civil servants, industrialists and representatives of the interest organisations into the Cabinet.

Women gained the right to vote in 1921 but it was not until 1947 that a woman entered the Cabinet. Until the 1970s there were only a very few women members of the Cabinet. In recent years women have held roughly a third of Cabinet posts. In the Social Democratic Government formed after the 1994 general election, half the members of the Cabinet are women.

The Organisation of the Government

Chancery

The Government Chancery is made up of the Cabinet Office, the Government Administrative Office and the thirteen ministries. Excluding the Foreign Office, there are approximately 1,800 employees in the Government Chancery, of whom some 750 are permanent civil servants, roughly 250 are legal and other experts, 150 or so are committee employees and some 450 are assistants and other office staff. These are all non-political civil servants. There are in addition some 100 politicians who resign in the event of a change of government. These political appointments comprise Cabinet members, Under-Secretaries of State (*statssekreterare*), Press Secretaries and political advisers.

The head of a government department is always a Cabinet minister. The head of a department is assisted by three high-ranking officials: the Under-Secretary of State, the Permanent Under-Secretary (*expeditionschef*) and the Under-Secretary for Legal Affairs (*rättschef*); in some departments there is also an Under-Secretary for Planning. Nowadays the Under-Secretary of State and usually the Under-Secretary for Planning are political appointees.

The Minister is responsible for the political direction of the department. The Under-Secretary of State is the closest political colleague of the Minister, but the Under-Secretary of State also has responsibilities for directing and planning the internal affairs of the ministry. The Minister and the Under-Secretary of State are counselled by political advisers and have assistants who deal with information, the planning of engagements and correspondence.

The everyday work of the department takes place in the specialist units of the ministry. The head of a unit is usually the Assistant Under-Secretary (*departementsråd*), while other officials are known as Administrative Officers (*departementssekreterare*).

In most of the ministries there is a special legal affairs secretariat, headed by the Under-Secretary for Legal Affairs. Its main business is the drafting of legislation and statutory regulations. The job of the Permanent Under-Secretary is to ensure that particular items of government legislation are formulated in a legally correct fashion. In some departments the jobs of the Permanent Under-Secretary and the Under-Secretary for Legal Affairs are carried out by a single individual. Some departments

also have secretariats for international affairs, for planning and budgetary questions, for commissions of inquiry, and for research and development.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs differs from the other departments in that the ministry is not only a civil service body preparing legislation but also a public authority coordinating diplomatic activity and the administration of foreign affairs. A large part of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs work in embassies and consulates abroad.

The Cabinet Office has a political section and a non-political one. Its political part is made up of the Prime Minister's Office and – during the term of the four-party non-Socialist Government – four coordinating secretariats each headed by an Under-Secretary of State. The non-political part of the Cabinet Office consists of a legal affairs department, whose duties include the security of the Government Chancery, the recording of the minutes during Cabinet meetings and the legal and administrative coherence of the ministries.

Commissions of Inquiry

Since Swedish government departments are relatively small the preparatory work on matters of major importance is usually carried out by ad hoc committees. These commissions are the investigative agencies of the Government. Their duties include finding out the facts, analysing them and developing new proposals.

A commission of this kind has the status of a special public authority and is subordinate to the Government. The Government issues its commission and appoints the members who are usually drawn from politics, the public authorities, local government, the interest organisations and advanced research institutes. Many of the major commissions of inquiry usually consist of representatives of both government and opposition parties.

The commission system has been of enormous importance to the decision-making process of Swedish politics. Commissions of inquiry have paved the way for many of the major reforms and have often served as a forum for achieving compromises and arriving at a broad consensus. Since the beginning of the 1980s, however, the role played by the commissions has diminished. The commissions are no longer able to recommend new reforms which increase public expenditure. They are

also required to work more swiftly; the normal duration is two years at most. The findings of the various commissions are rarely politically unanimous; the level of disagreement has risen.

The altered role of the commission system has had a noticeable impact on Swedish politics. The commissions of inquiry provided public debate with an underpinning of information and expertise; it is difficult at present to see how this can be compensated for. The major interest organisations have lost an important channel of influence with direct access to the political decision-making process. The reduced significance of the commission system also reflects the shift of Swedish politics away from a consensus-oriented political culture towards a more conflictual one.

The System of Referrals

A proposal made by a commission of inquiry is normally referred to other public authorities and organisations for their comments. A compilation of the findings of the referral process is usually included in the Bill the Government moves in the Riksdag.

While various interested bodies, private as well as public, are given the opportunity to make their views known as part of the legislative process in other countries, what makes the referral process in Sweden special is its comprehensive, systematic and public nature. The referral process is the rule not the exception. Usually a wide circle of interested parties are invited to make comments. For a large number of interest organisations the referral process has become one of the most important means of bringing influence to bear on the Government.

It remains an open question how membership of the EU will affect the political decision-making process. Fears have been expressed that the degree of public access involved in the Swedish systems of referral and commissions of inquiry will be difficult to combine with the rules for decision-making that apply in the EU.

Cabinet Decision-making Procedures

In contrast with the situation in many other countries, members of the Swedish Cabinet have only limited opportunities to make decisions on

their own. In formal terms the freedom of action of individual Cabinet members is restricted in two respects. First the requirement of collective responsibility is a fundamental principle of government. An individual government department may not decide matters on its own, apart from in relation to certain minor issues. Second a basic feature of Swedish administration is the separation of powers between government ministries and administrative authorities. As will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter, Government ministers may not seek to influence the exercise of authority by public bodies nor their implementation of legislation.

The principle of collective responsibility is stipulated by the constitutional provision that Government business is decided by ministers at meetings of the Cabinet. Cabinet meetings are normally held every Thursday. Annually the Government makes decisions on some 14,000 matters. The main items of Government business relate primarily to the Budget while others concern government Bills and the issuing of directives to commission of inquiry. The executive power of the Government is also embodied in the appointments it makes to high-ranking posts, statutory regulation and the issuing of detailed administrative instructions which stipulate how the public authorities should make use of budgetary funds. The vast majority of Cabinet decisions, however, are to do with administrative matters, such as appeals, exemptions, petitions for clemency and other individual issues. Over the years a large number of matters of this kind have been delegated by the Cabinet to other agencies; the responsibility for matters relating to residence permits was, for example, transferred in 1992 from the Cabinet to the newly established Aliens Appeals Board. Dealing with administrative matters still takes up a considerable portion of the working hours of the government ministries.

The Cabinet meeting is only the final stage of a lengthy decision-making process. With the Prime Minister in the chair, items of business are "gavelled" through at a brisk pace. There is hardly any real discussion; if doubts arise on a particular matter it will be set aside and brought back for discussion at a later date. The real decisions have already been made in the course of the preparatory process. The making of Government decisions requires the solution of two problems of coordination, within a particular ministry and between ministries.

The general principle for the solution of intra-Governmental conflicts is that the matter should be decided at the lowest level possible. Only if

the problem cannot be decided by consultations between public officials, will the matter be referred to the Under-Secretaries of State. If they cannot resolve the matter it passes to the Ministers, initially through a process of bilateral consultation. Only in the last instance and on issues of major political significance will the matter be taken up at a full meeting of the Cabinet.

Internal coordinating mechanisms are put under great strain in the course of the drafting of the Finance Act. The traditional conflicts mean that the Treasury adopts a defensive position and refuses the increased expenditure estimates of the individual ministries. The crisis in public finances has driven this process into reverse. The current solution is that the Government first sets out an overall framework for expenditure, within which the departments seek to allocate their spending within specified limits.

The Problems of Cabinet Government

Two previous phases of Swedish history have left their mark on the Government Chancery of today: bureaucratic rule and the expansion of the public sector. The legalistic management of the daily work of the ministries was the dominant feature until relatively late into the twentieth century. The status of the ministries as the supreme authority on administrative matters made huge demands on meticulously correct management. In the middle of this century the public sector expanded massively. This expansion of the welfare state meant that the ministries had to take on the role of sectorial planning bodies for the Government. Even today the primary responsibility of the government departments lies in preparing items of government business and drafting government bills.

Three major trends in contemporary politics are mounting a challenge to the rather antiquated organisational structure of the government ministries. Political problems are growing more complex. Many of the major issues of the day cannot simply be referred to a single ministry's area of competence but have a large number of interrelated aspects. The attention of the mass media adds another complex dimension to the political decision-making process. A related trend is the increasingly

short-term perspective of politics. The amount of time available for drafting and decision-making has been reduced. Major issues suddenly appear on the political agenda and require immediate decisions. The internationalisation of politics is also making new demands on the organisational structure and decision-making methods of government.

The experience of other countries proves that there are no simple solutions to the problem of how to structure the work of the government. Instead it is a matter of weighing up the best responses to several difficult dilemmas. The decision-making process has to satisfy the requirements of short term crisis management while individual decisions have to be compatible with the long-term program of the Government. A coherent government policy makes huge demands on the work of coordination but any requirement for absolute coordination can result in delays to the decision-making process and the reduction of politics to the lowest common denominator between many conflicting interests. Decision-making demands up to date and complete information but too much information risks overloading the capacities of the executive.

The Government in the Parliamentary System

According to the principles of parliamentary government there are two circumstances which establish the democratic legitimacy of the Government. In free elections the voters determine the political composition of the Riksdag. Through its powers of scrutiny and its influence over the formation of government, the Riksdag determines the political composition of the Government.

An indirect system of this kind is based on a combination of delegation and accountability. The Government exercises executive power but is accountable to parliament. The Riksdag is empowered to represent the Swedish people while the voting public is free to replace their representatives.

What is required for the system to work is not only that the voters can reject their representatives and that the Riksdag can dismiss the Government, but also that the Riksdag and the Government are able to carry out their responsibilities in the manner specified by the constitution.

The course of Swedish politics since the 1980s has shown that in practical terms the workings of the parliamentary system are no longer in accord with this model. Since governments in recent years have been

unable to command a majority in the Riksdag, executive power has been weakened.

An instance in point was the government crisis of 1990 which made clear that although the Government remains responsible for running the country it often lacks the power to carry out its constitutional obligations.

8 Public Administration

Sweden has a very large public sector in comparison with those of the other industrial nations. While other countries have opted to a greater extent for non-governmental organisational structures and insurance models, the administration of the Swedish welfare state is managed predominantly by central, regional and local government.

The historical roots of this dependence on the state, however, stretch much further back in time than the past few decades. The state has played a major role in Swedish society for several centuries. Even during the period of *laissez-faire* Liberalism in the nineteenth century the state was to take on major new responsibilities such as building railways, managing forestry and exploiting the ore deposits of Northern Sweden.

The current challenge to the dominance of the nation state, mounted primarily by the forces of internationalisation and decentralisation, is having a particularly powerful impact on a society as dominated by the state as Sweden.

The Government and the Administrative Authorities

Control over the administrative agencies of the state is a matter of considerable dispute. The constitution lays down conflicting principles on this matter. According to one constitutional provision the administrative agencies are subordinate to the Government (an exception is made for those few administrative agencies directly accountable to the

Riksdag). A Cabinet minister, however, cannot freely intervene in the work of a ministry under his authority. Firstly because the principle of collective decision-making means that it is the Cabinet as a whole, and not an individual Cabinet minister, which is in charge of the administration. Secondly there is a special article in the constitution which stipulates that no public authority, neither the Government, the Riksdag nor any local council, may determine how an administrative authority shall make its decision in a particular case concerning the exercise of its authority or the implementation of the law. Due process requires that the law be implemented in a non-partisan, objective manner, which sets limits to the freedom of politicians to intervene in administrative matters. This does not mean that the government lacks the means to control the administration. The constitution provides four methods of control: the power of appointment, the power to issue regulations, the power of appropriation and the power of adjudication. -

The Power of Appointment

The constitution stipulates that the power of appointment is in the hands of the Government. Appointments to serve on courts or administrative authorities subordinate to the Government are made by the Government or by a public authority designated by the Government. In practice it is only the higher-ranking posts that are appointed by the Government. There are two limitations on the Government's power of appointment. When making appointments to posts within the administration, only objective factors such as the merits and competence of the candidate may be taken into consideration. For some high-ranking positions, there may also be a requirement that the candidate has Swedish citizenship.

The Power to Issue Regulations

The power to issue regulations forms part of the legislative power. The Instrument of Government distinguishes between laws and regulations issued by statutory order. A law is enacted by the Riksdag, normally preceded by a government Bill. Regulations issued by statutory instrument are decided by the Government and may, for example, contain

administrative provisions. The Riksdag may also delegate by law part of its regulatory power to the Government. In its turn the Government may delegate its regulatory powers to administrative and local government authorities. In practice the major part of the corpus of public regulations is made up of the regulations issued by administrative authorities.

The Power of Appropriation

The power of appropriation is the right to determine the revenue and expenditure of the state. This power of financial control is vested in the Riksdag: public revenue is determined by taxation laws, and public expenditure by the Budget. The Government works out its budget proposals by establishing priorities based on the spending estimates of the public authorities. The funds of the State and its other assets are at the disposal of the Government. The Government may, with the authorisation of the Riksdag, take up loans and assume financial obligations on behalf of the State.

The Power of Adjudication

The Government also exercises a power of adjudication in that it serves as a final court of appeal on administrative matters. Nowadays, however, fewer and fewer individual cases are handled by the Government. Evaluations and audits are becoming increasingly important in the management of the administration. The National Audit Bureau and the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development provide the Government with the basic data with which to evaluate the public administration. The Government may also instruct the Attorney General to carry out special investigations into the administration.

Organisation

The most important parts of Swedish public administration are the ministries, the central administrative authorities and local government administration at both county and municipal level. The Swedish model differs in some respects from what has become the norm for the European administrative tradition.

The Autonomy of Administrative Agencies

For almost three centuries Sweden has had a bipartite structure for public administration. This division of organisational structure between the ministries and the central administrative authorities is virtually unparalleled in other European countries.

This system means that central coordination of the administration of the state presents particular problems in Sweden. These problems will not be lessened by the process of internationalisation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has long been responsible for coordinating the foreign policy of the Cabinet. European integration, however, means that it is becoming increasingly difficult to draw the boundary between foreign and domestic policy. As a result the Trade Department of the Foreign Ministry has been expanded by over thirty working parties which are responsible for coordinating the practical work of integration within various policy sectors. Civil servants from both the ministries and the administrative authorities serve on these working groups. Reference groups made up of representatives of the various interest organisations work in tandem with the working parties.

The Central Administrative Agencies

Examples of central administrative agencies are the National Labour Market Board, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Judicial Board for Public Lands and Funds, the National Environmental Protection Agency, the National Police Board, the National Agency for Education, the National Board of Health and Welfare and Statistics Sweden. As part of the process of decentralisation several of these agencies have been relocated outside Stockholm.

The central administrative agencies have a number of features in common. They are directly subordinate to the Government, their brief allows them to operate throughout the country and they are subdivided into secretariats, divisions and bureaus.

The head of a central administrative agency is normally a director-general appointed by the Government for a set term, usually for a first term of six years and subsequently for three years at a time. Some directors-general are career civil servants, others come from trade and industry while many have been career politicians. The extent to which

the Government uses its power of appointment in favour of politicians is a controversial issue.

Hitherto a majority of central administrative agencies have usually been managed by a board. The system of composition of these boards has varied over the years. In the central administrative agency of former times decisions were made by a collegiate body, made up of the highest-ranking officials of the agency. During the nineteenth century this collegiate decision-making body was replaced by a system in which the final decision was in the hands of the director-general. During the twentieth century this was replaced as the dominant management form by a system of lay representation. By laymen are meant people other than professional civil servants. As a result politicians and representatives of organised interest groups were given access to the highest decision-making bodies of the administrative authorities. The motive behind this change was to have individuals with specialist knowledge represented in the leadership of the public administration and to provide a broader, more democratic basis for administrative decisions. In recent years, however, the system of lay management has been challenged on the basis that special interest groups are given a disproportionate influence over the state, and the whole system is now being re-assessed. A proposal has been put forward to return to the system in which the director-general has the final say. The status of the lay representatives would in that case be solely advisory and they would no longer have a formal decision-making role.

As has already been pointed out, the model of autonomous administrative authorities is a distinguishing feature of Swedish public administration. The precise meaning of the autonomy they enjoy is a matter of dispute and has been the subject of any number of commissions of inquiry and decisions at government level. In 1987 the Riksdag laid down some general principles. The majority of the Riksdag interpreted the meaning of the Instrument of Government to be that the will of the people is to be realised by the Riksdag and the Government exercising control of the administration. In consequence the public administration should serve as an effective tool for the realisation of the intentions of the Riksdag and the Government. In this sense the public authorities are not autonomous. The general conclusion was therefore that the Government both can and should control the administrative agencies. The Instrument of Government only lays down that neither the Government nor any other external agency may influence the way in which a public

authority makes its decision in individual cases concerning the exercise of public authority or the application of law. There are, however, strongly conflicting views on what these general principles mean in practice. The extent to which government departments have the right to influence public authorities through informal contacts remains a controversial issue.

Local and Regional Administration

The State has three different options at its disposal for the implementation of its policies across the country as a whole.

The responsibility can be transferred to the local and regional government authorities. Important aspects of the welfare state, such as education, social services, provision for the elderly and health care are administered by the municipalities and the county councils.

Another model involves the central administrative agencies constructing a nationwide administrative organisation under their own control, one example being the Labour Market Administration (*Arbetsmarknadsverket*). In this case the central administrative agency itself is called the National Labour Market Board (*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen*). Each county has its own county labour board which is the county authority for labour market issues. Job placement and the provision of information and guidance are managed by the local employment offices.

The third option is to transfer the responsibility to the county administrative board (*länsstyrelsen*), as is the case for matters such as nature conservancy, environmental protection, construction and planning, and civil defence.

The County Administrative Boards

The office of County Governor (*landshövding*) was instituted in the middle of the seventeenth century. As the representative of the national administration, the role of this official was to implement government decisions throughout the county. One of the major responsibilities of the County Governor was to supervise the collection of taxes.

Over the years the county administrative boards have been re-organised many times. However, they still retain their primary function

as the regional organs of the State. The task of the county administrative boards is to implement throughout the county the objectives that have been determined at national level for various social sectors in accordance with the instructions of central government.

However, the county administrative board is not just the mouthpiece of the state, it has also developed into a body for promoting the interests of the county. Since the 1970s this double role has been manifested in the way the executive committee of the county administrative board has been appointed. The County Governor is appointed by the Government but the other executive committee members of the county administrative board are appointed by the county councils, the elected regional assemblies.

In recent years the emphasis has been on attempting to improve coordination between the many different administrative authorities at regional level. A number of regional bodies have been set up within the county administrative boards. The county administrative boards have also been given greater freedom to decide their own organisation for themselves. As a result there is a wide range of forms of internal administrative structure varying from one county to another.

The Defence of the Realm

In 1992 the changes that have taken place in Sweden's national security environment in recent years led to a decision by the Riksdag in favour of new guidelines for the civil and military defence of the realm. A reduction in scale of the military defence forces was to be combined with an improvement in the quality of the forces. This decision by the Riksdag also meant changes in the management and administrative structure of the military. The new organisation came into effect in 1994.

The army, navy, air force and the defence staff together constitute a public authority known as the Defence Force. This new public authority is headed by the chief of staff and its central administration is known as the headquarters. The territorial organisation of the defence forces is divided into three military areas, which in their turn are divided into defence districts.

There are central administrative agencies responsible for the management, coordination and provision of the civil defence, for the protection of the population, for emergency services, psychological defence and

health care. The country is divided into three civil defence districts, which coincide with the military defence areas. Each civil defence area is run by a civil defence chief of staff, who is normally the County Governor. The county administrative boards, the county councils and the municipal authorities all have an important role to play in civil defence.

As a result of the latest changes the peacetime organisation of the defence forces has come to resemble more closely that planned to come into effect in the event of war. The Instrument of Government allows for the adaptation of the leadership and organisational structures to the special requirements of wartime. If there are difficulties in assembling the Riksdag, the War Delegation can meet in its stead. The Government may take over part of the legislative powers of the Riksdag. Both central and local government authorities have plans for administering society if the country is at war or exposed to the danger of war.

The Arts and Sciences

Many scientific and cultural institutions have the same status as public authorities and in consequence are formally part of the public administration. Their organisation and executive control differ, however, in certain respects, from other public bodies. The intention here is to provide the arts and sciences with a greater measure of independence. As a result of the reorganisation of higher education, for example, the universities have been given greater freedom to determine their internal organisation, educational programs and staff appointments within the general framework set out by the Riksdag and the Government. Two universities have also been converted into independent foundations.

Public Enterprises

A special form of administrative agency exists in Sweden for more commercially oriented activities. A public enterprise (*affärsverk*) can be described as an intermediate body between a public authority and a limited company. Although it is an administrative body, it is exempted from a number of the restrictions that apply to other public authorities. The freedom it enjoys in financial terms in particular is considerably more extensive.

Swedish State Railways and the National Maritime Administration are examples of public enterprises. A number of other public enterprises such as the Forestry Service, the National Power Administration, Swedish Telecom and Sweden Post have recently been turned into limited companies.

Limited Companies

It has become common practice to transfer responsibility for national administrative tasks from bodies run as public authorities to bodies resembling commercial companies, particularly for those tasks which are carried out under commercial conditions. Both privately and publicly owned companies are regulated by company law. However, a number of laws that regulate the operations of public authorities do not apply to central and local government activities run as commercial operations. In this way neither administrative laws nor the principle of public access to official documents laid down in the Freedom of the Press Act apply to these companies unless otherwise specified in legislation.

Other Forms of Organisation

Apart from public authorities and companies there are many other forms of operation for public administration. Public duties may be carried out by independent foundations. Administrative duties are also carried out by voluntary associations. Considerable sums of government money are channelled via the organisations of civil society. Sporting organisations, for example, receive massive support from both central and local government.

Personnel

The most striking development affecting employees in the Swedish civil service during the twentieth century has been the enormous growth and altered composition of the service. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were in total some 1,500 civil servants in the central government administration. Subsequently the number of public

employees steadily increased and as a result of a major expansionary period during the 1960s and 1970s, there are now some 1.6 million public sector employees – this figure corresponds to slightly more than a third of the total labour force.

Public sector employees are nowadays to be found in three main sectors: health care, social services and education. The expansion in the number of public sector employees took place mainly within the areas of operation of the local and county councils. The proportion of public sector employees made up of central government civil servants has fallen from 64 per cent in 1950 to 25 per cent in 1990.

The natural educational route to the traditional civil service posts was through legal studies. For many years lawyers were the dominant profession in Swedish administration, primarily in the government ministries. The proportion of lawyers has diminished in tandem with the growth of the public sector and the expansion of the welfare state.

Nowadays civil servants tend to have a more varied educational background. Technical specialists, scientists, economists and other social scientists have increased as a proportion of the whole.

Although women make up an increasing proportion of higher-ranking civil servants, the rate of change is slow. There are still very few women in the higher-ranking executive posts. The higher the position in the hierarchy, the fewer the number of women there are. Women are employed mainly in the fields of health, social care and education. Roughly eight out of ten employees at municipal and county level are women.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the expansion of the public sector has stopped and gone into reverse. The economic recession has forced the administrative authorities at central government, municipal and county level to make staff reductions. After one hundred years of continual growth, the public sector has reached a turning-point.

Increased demands for efficiency have also had an impact on the working conditions and employment terms of civil service staff. Efforts have been made to replace the conventional public official with an effective and modern manager. The fixed career paths and preordained promotional ladder of the previous system is being replaced by a system in which the terms of employment and advancement prospects increasingly resemble those of private industry. Job security in the public sector nowadays is virtually identical with the rules operating in the private labour market. Fixed wage scales have been replaced by a wages system tailored to the individual. Government civil servants have been

given practically the same negotiating rights and rights to take industrial action as private employees.

Another controversial issue surrounds the conflict between political democracy and the trade union rights of employees. The risk that co-determination by civil service employees may lead to an inappropriate degree of influence being exerted over the decision-making of public bodies has resulted in changes to the rules and to a number of restrictive measures being imposed on trade union influence.

Some of the attempts to make public administration resemble the private sector have, however, led to a backlash. The official responsibility of civil servants was diluted greatly during the 1970s but increased once more at the end of the 1980s. Legislative changes have led to increased freedom to punish a government civil servant for wrongdoing in office.

Central and local government employees can be convicted of three different forms of malfeasance in office. One of these is for a breach of the duty of confidentiality as laid down in the Official Secrets Act. The nature of the other two offences, misuse of office and bribery, are described in the penal code.

Anyone in the exercise of public authority who wilfully or through negligence disregards the duties of his office shall be sentenced for misuse of office to pay a fine or to imprisonment for at most two years. If the offence has been committed wilfully and must be regarded as serious, the offender shall be sentenced for gross misuse of office to a minimum period of imprisonment of six months and a maximum of six years.

The criminal offence of taking a bribe involves an employee "accepting, taking a promise of or demanding a bribe or other illicit reward for his official service". The offence of bribery involves promising or offering a bribe. This law, which is interpreted comparatively strictly, applies both to public and private employees. The provisions also apply to the members of central and local government executive committees and boards.

The Economy of the Public Sector

Public sector expenditure expressed as a proportion of GDP rose from 5 per cent at the beginning of the 1950s to just over 70 per cent at present. Although the rate of increase was interrupted at the beginning of the 1980s after several decades of continuous large-scale expansion, it started to rise again at the start of the 1990s. The relative increase of recent years has come about mainly due to the reduction in GDP and also to the rise in public expenditure owing to the costs of unemployment and the banking crisis.

Since the end of the 1970s the Riksdag and the Government have made numerous attempts to arrest the increases in public expenditure. The Government has issued directives to the public authorities to the effect that when they supply their estimates they should include alternatives that would lead to budget cuts. Public authorities have been ordered to investigate the costs of their regulatory activities. Budgetary procedures have been altered so as to shift the focus from short-term to long-term assessment.

There are several stages to the budgetary process in which the basic data supplied by the central administrative authorities plays a crucial role. Once the Government has set out its budgetary framework, the authorities have to present their estimates. More far-reaching supply estimates are presented every third year. The public authorities also have to provide an annual accounting of their achievements. These documents provide the basic data for the Government's Finance Act which, once it has been passed the Riksdag, results in the issue of the detailed administrative instructions to the various authorities.

The economic management of the state has changed from a system of detailed regulatory management to a system of management by objectives and results. Instead of determining in detail how the authorities should spend their resources, nowadays the Riksdag and the Government normally only stipulate the general goals and the overall framework for operations. This gives individual public authorities a freer rein to make use of their resources in the most efficient way possible. The crucial factor here is that the Riksdag and the Government are subsequently able to evaluate to what extent the authority has succeeded in carrying out its responsibilities. As a result the accounts of the authority,

together with their oversight and evaluation play a key role in the new management model.

The lessons to be learnt from these new forms of economic management are still not clear-cut. In many cases there is evidence that the authorities have made savings and become more efficient. But general estimates for productivity in the public sector fail to show any major improvements during recent decades. The deficit in the public sector accounts is now so great that marginal improvements in the efficiency of the public authorities would be insufficient to put it right.

Rules for Administrative Procedure

The publicity principle, which is such an important element of Swedish law, is of major significance for the administration both at central and at local government level. The constitution guarantees the right of the individual citizen to be given access to the generality of public authority documents. Full public access is the guiding principle, only excepting the need to maintain official secrets. The general rules determining the nature of official secrets are laid down in the Law on the Freedom of Expression, while the Official Secrets Act contains the more detailed provisions.

A special law, the Administrative Procedure Act (*förvaltningslagen*), regulates the procedures to be followed by the central and local government administrative agencies. The provisions of the Act which affect the exercise of public authority in relation to individuals are of particular importance.

The Administrative Procedure Act places a special obligation of service to the public on the administrative authorities. The Act contains requirements for mutual cooperation between authorities, simple and rapid handling of matters and the use of easily comprehensible language.

In order to safeguard the impartiality of the administration the Administrative Procedure Act contains detailed provisions on conflicts of interest. Anyone with a particular interest in a matter, which might reasonably be supposed to influence the way the matter is dealt with, may not be involved in its administration.

The Administrative Procedure Act sets out rules for the way in which matters are dealt with by the public authorities. The handling of a case has to follow a number of predetermined stages from the raising of the case until its resolution. Swedish administrative praxis is by tradition relatively formalistic.

An important safeguard under the rule of law is the right to appeal against decisions. The majority of appeals are decided in special administrative courts. The hearings in these administrative courts are regulated by the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

The Regulatory Power of the State

The rules defining the powers of the state to issue regulations are set out in the Instrument of Government. The rules of the Instrument of Government refer to the issue of legal provisions in the form of regulations by statutory order, which are binding on both public authorities and individual citizens. The regulations set out what rules the public authorities and individuals must observe and what the consequences should be if their provisions are not complied with. A distinctive feature of statutory regulations is that their wording is formulated in general terms. A common term for regulations of this kind is a statute. The Instrument of Government divides the power to issue regulations between the Riksdag, the Government, the administrative authorities and municipal authorities.

At present there are three main trends which affect the issuing of regulations by the state. The first change is a movement towards the passing of laws which establish only a general framework. The second involves deregulation. The third trend relates to the Europeanisation of the legal norms.

Framework Laws

A framework law is legislation which only contains general goals and guidelines and not detailed regulations. The use of framework laws coincides with the implementation of the new methods for economic management. The Riksdag lays down only the general rules involved which are then supplemented by more precise provisions for the applica-

tion of the legislation in the form of regulations by statutory order, other regulations and negotiated agreements. Examples of framework laws are the Working Environment Act, the Social Services Act and the Environmental Protection Act. One of the reasons for the framework system is that in areas subject to rapid change, particularly in the technological sphere, it would be virtually impossible for the Riksdag to set out legislative provisions in the necessary detail. As a result a great deal of regulation is decided by the public authorities at lower level. Framework laws are a highly controversial matter in relation to the legal rights of the individual. The general wording of the legal text rarely provides detailed guidance which means that public authorities enjoy considerable freedom in determining how to apply the law. It is here that a desire to improve efficiency comes into conflict with the requirements of due process.

Deregulation

Over the years central government and local authorities have managed to devise a long list of detailed regulations applying to both individuals and companies. It is very difficult to get an overall sense of the extent and complexity of the regulatory system which has also proved to involve significant costs. Like many other countries, Sweden has therefore tried to thin out the abundant flora of statutory orders, regulations, directives and other rules.

Currently the public authorities have standing instructions to monitor continuously the regulations they issue and to check whether they are necessary and have been appropriately drawn up. Many statutory orders have been cancelled. One of the main purposes of deregulation has been to simplify and reduce the number of rules which companies have to comply with.

In many cases, however, regulatory reform has been a slow process. Various special interests have become enmeshed in the regulatory system as it applies to different parts of society. The government ministries and sectorial authorities try to defend regulation in their areas of competence. The organised interest groups and the political representatives of various special interests oppose change. Even though industry is opposed in principle to state regulation particular companies may have an interest in the survival of regulations that favour their particular industry

Inadequate levels of competition characterise many markets in Sweden owing to the effects of state regulation.

Europeanisation

With the ratification of the EEA treaty those parts of the regulatory apparatus of the EC/EU that concern the free movement of individuals, goods, capital and services apply in Sweden as well. Swedish membership of the EU would further extend the area of application of European Community law.

The ratification of the EEA agreement has already had significant consequences for public administration in Sweden. The EC/EU is so constructed that it is its common institutions that are primarily involved in the drafting, passing and interpreting of Community legislation. However, the implementation of these decisions is to all intents and purposes in the hands of the public authorities of each member state. Sweden's accession to the European Communities would not involve the creation of any new administrative bodies, but would mean changes to the working methods of the Swedish public authorities.

A fundamental principle of the EU is the notion that Community law takes precedence over national law. As a result Swedish courts and administrative authorities may be obliged to implement Community law, even when this would mean setting aside Swedish law. Courts and public authorities are able, and in some cases even obliged, to obtain a preliminary ruling from the European Court of Justice on the interpretation of Community law before arriving at a verdict of their own.

In 1993 the Swedish constitutional commission of inquiry set up prior to the application for EU membership concluded that the provisions of the constitution relating to the public administration would not be an insuperable problem. There was no constitutional barrier to ensuring that the accountability of the Swedish government to Community institutions for the faithful adaptation of internal domestic regulations to the principles of Community law would not be obstructed by the Swedish system of autonomous administrative authorities.

Swedish membership of the EU would mean that Swedish civil servants would participate in the various committees and agencies involved in drafting the decisions of the Union. The coordinating role of the Cabinet will be of crucial importance in this regard.

9 The Legal System

Three principal factors determined the development of Swedish law in the Middle Ages. The first was the social structure of the country. Sweden formed a rather loosely assembled whole; the different parts of the country were long able to preserve a great deal of their independence. Social stratification would only gradually become a more prominent feature. The monarchy, the nobility and the church developed into the dominant centres of power, frequently in the course of mutual conflict. The second factor was the influence of the Catholic Church. The Church had its own courts and its internal organisation was to influence other aspects of society. Influences from abroad constitute the third explanatory factor. The development of legal systems in continental Europe and the training of lawyers at the European universities also helped to shape events in Sweden.

During the thirteenth century the provincial laws were codified, these were shaped both by ancient domestic legal traditions and by continental influences. Justice was administered mainly as part of the deliberations of the Things, which met at regular intervals. By the middle of the fourteenth century the application of laws had been made more uniform across the country. It was then that the Lawman was given a vital role as the judge for a whole county. In earlier days legal officials at local and county level were elected by the commons but the sovereign gradually gained greater control over their appointment. The expansion of royal power over the administration of justice became particularly apparent during the seventeenth century when a new form of judicial body began to compete with the locally-based Things.

The modern division of the law courts into three forms of jurisdiction

dates from the Middle Ages. Gradually the power of judgement enjoyed by the monarch was to be exercised in combination with the *curia regia*. The towns were served by municipal courts based on the German model; these were made up of the mayor, a number of councillors elected by the burgesses and a royal sheriff. In addition there were clerical courts and other bodies that had judicial powers.

The era of Sweden's status as a Great Power in the seventeenth century was to influence the development of the legal system in several ways. The new collegiate bodies that made up the national administration also served as courts of law. The appeal courts which were gradually established during the seventeenth century served as important instances of control in relation to the lower courts. Legal praxis became more uniform during this period. Important influences from Continental legal systems were transmitted through the court of appeal set up in 1630 in Dorpat.

The historical development of the Swedish legal system was also coloured by the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism. The break with papal power in the Reformation led to orthodoxy and literalism. The practice of obedience to Scripture and the Law which was then entrenched is one of the reasons for the crucial role attributed to the written preparatory works to legal texts in Swedish legal doctrine.

A major legal commission was set up at the end of the seventeenth century. Eventually its work resulted in the National Law Code of 1734 which was to be of enormous importance for the Swedish legal system. In common with medieval law codes it was divided into a number of principal sections, known as *balkar* or books. Laws such as the Instrument of Government and other constitutional laws lay outside its remit. The introduction of the National Law Code of 1734 meant that the same laws applied in both the towns and the rural areas.

For a long period it was the Crown which exercised ultimate judicial power. *Svea Hovrätt* was set up in 1614 and intended to function as a final court of appeal. However, the appeal courts set up at that time soon came to serve not as final but as intermediate courts of appeal. The judicial power of the monarchy was exercised by the sovereign sitting together with the Council. During the eighteenth century judicial powers were transferred to a special body made up of members of the Council who had experience as judges. The monarch had two votes as well as the casting vote in the event of a tie. Under the influence of the Enlightenment doctrine of the separation of powers a Royal Supreme

Court was established in 1789. The founding of the Supreme Court was to be a major step along the road to an independent legal system. The administration of justice was separated from the administration of government. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court remained very much under the control of the Crown.

The doctrine of the separation of powers was clearly expressed in the Instrument of Government of 1809. Judicial power would be vested in judges who could not be dismissed. In strictly formal terms the right of the monarch to sit in the Supreme Court was maintained until as late as 1909, but was actually only asserted on one occasion. The judgements of the Supreme Court continued to be rendered formally on behalf of the Crown.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the system of law courts in Sweden had developed the fundamental structure it still displays today. As a consequence of the social changes that have taken place the lower courts have been reorganised. As in the administration of local government, the distinction between town and country has disappeared. Municipal courts, the police force, the prosecution service and law enforcement were all nationalised in 1965. A few years later the local courts of the rural areas and the municipal courts of the urban centres were amalgamated into a uniform system of district courts.

It would take too long even to sketch in the broad details of the expansion of legislation during the present century. The basic system for enacting legislation has, however, remained relatively unaltered. A number of current laws derive directly from the the National Law Code of 1734, the main areas in which new legislation has been passed relate to social affairs and working life. Seen from the perspective of the last hundred years, one area of legislation in which fundamental changes have occurred is in the area of family law. Above all it has been the struggle of women for emancipation and for the recognition of their equal rights that has left its mark on legislation.

Constitutional Safeguards

The Instrument of Government contains a number of general provisions intended to protect the foundations of a society based on the rule of law.

The introductory paragraph asserts that public power must be exercised under the law. There are to be courts of law for the administration of justice. The law courts, like any other body which carries out the business of public administration, must respect the equality of all persons before the law and maintain objectivity and impartiality. Every citizen is guaranteed a number of fundamental rights and freedoms in relation to the state. These include the right to have tested before a court of law action by a public authority to deprive a citizen of his or her liberty or other forcible intervention, the prohibition of retroactive punishment, the prohibition of the setting up of special courts to try offences which have already been committed or to try a particular case. Proceedings in courts must be open to the public.

The Instrument of Government sets out additional provisions affecting the courts of law in a special chapter on judicial and general administration. Two important courts are explicitly referred to: the Supreme Court is the highest court of general jurisdiction and the Supreme Administrative Court is the highest administrative court. Courts other than these must be established by law. Courts of law must be presided over by permanent judges.

A number of provisions are intended to safeguard the independence of the law courts from the political powers that be. No public authority, including the Riksdag, may determine how a court shall adjudicate a particular case or how it should implement a rule of law. The independence of the judiciary is founded on an especially powerful form of security of tenure. Judges can be forced to resign only under two circumstances, either by their reaching pensionable age or by proving that they are manifestly incapable of holding office through the commission of a criminal offence or by gross or repeated neglect of their responsibilities of office.

In terms of judicial practice Swedish courts have long been considered to be entitled to reject a legal provision if they deemed it to be in conflict with the constitution. As of 1980 this right of judicial review is expressly stipulated in the Instrument of Government. If a court of law finds that a provision conflicts with a provision of a fundamental law or other superior statute, or that the prescribed procedure was set aside in some significant respect in the introduction of the provision, the provision may not be applied. Courts of law and public authorities are thus not only entitled but also obliged to set aside a provision if it is in conflict with a superior statute. The right of judicial review is, however,

significantly restricted by a special clause. If the provision in question was passed by the Riksdag or the Government, it may only be set aside if the fault is manifest. Acts of parliament and ordinances are very rarely challenged by the courts or by public authorities.

The right of judicial review is one example of the way in which legislative provisions may be reviewed after they have been issued in relation to the legal rights of the individual. In the course of the preparation of legislation it is also possible to subject the wording of legislation prior to its enactment to an examination by jurists. The Instrument of Government stipulates that there should be a Council of Legislation made up of justices from both the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court. The verdict of the Council of Legislation may be solicited by the Government or by a committee of the Riksdag; a minority on a Riksdag committee are also entitled to solicit the opinion of the Council on draft legislation. The Instrument of Government stipulates that the opinion of the Council of Legislation should be solicited before the Riksdag takes a decision on laws of importance to individual citizens or to the public interest. If the Council has not been consulted on a legislative matter, the Government is obliged to present its reasons for failing to do so to the Riksdag. The scrutiny by the Council of Legislation should take into account the way in which the draft legislation relates to the fundamental laws and to the legal system in general, how its different provisions relate to one another and how the proposal relates to the rule of law; such scrutiny should also determine what problems may arise in the application of the proposed legislation.

In acceding to a variety of international conventions Sweden has undertaken to guarantee to its citizens the right of appeal to various courts. The most important of these conventions is the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950. It was decided in 1994 to incorporate the Convention into Swedish law.

In a variety of administrative matters it is the Government or a particular central administrative authority that constitutes the supreme court of appeal. The European Convention, however, requires that individual citizens may have their civil rights and obligations reviewed by an independent and impartial court of law. In a number of rulings the European Court of Human Rights has found that Swedish procedure failed to satisfy the requirements of the Convention.

As a result it has been possible since 1988 to subject regulations to

review. An individual party may apply to the Supreme Administrative Court for the review of particular administrative decisions issued by the Government or by an administrative authority.

The Courts of Law

There are three different types of court in Sweden: courts of general jurisdiction, administrative courts and special courts. There is a three-tier hierarchy in both the courts of general jurisdiction and the administrative courts.

The Courts of General Jurisdiction

The main business of the general courts is to adjudicate in criminal and civil cases. The country is divided into a hundred or so district courts (*tingsrätter*), which serve as the courts of first instance in the system of general adjudication. There are six courts of appeal (*hovrätter*) which serve as intermediate courts. The Supreme Court (*Högsta domstolen*) is the final court of appeal.

In recent years various commissions of inquiry and public discussion have mainly centred on the increasing workload of the courts. There are two conflicting interests at stake here. On the one hand security before the law rests in the right to appeal a court verdict to a higher court. On the other, the overloading of the system may mean that the quality of justice suffers. The need to balance these interests has led to the agreement of the higher courts only to review more important cases in which there are legal principles at stake. A special permission of review is necessary for a case to be heard in the Supreme Court.

The Administrative Courts

The task of the administrative courts is to hear appeals against the decisions of the administrative authorities. It is only in recent times that the administrative courts were developed as fully autonomous bodies. The 24 county administrative courts (*länsrätter*), the current structure of which dates from 1979, were previously linked to the county administrative boards. The administrative courts of appeal (*kammarrätter*)

derive from an appeal court which was in its turn an offshoot of the Crown Lands Judiciary Board (*Kammarkollegiet*) during the seventeenth century. The current structure of the four administrative courts of appeal was devised in the 1970s. The Supreme Administrative Court (*Regeringsrätten*) was established in 1909. Previously the Government had served as the final court of appeal in administrative matters. Not until the beginning of the 1970s did the Supreme Administrative Court acquire a chancery of its own; matters before the court had previously been prepared in the government ministries.

The county administrative courts are the courts of first instance for appeals against decisions made by government administrative authorities and against local government decisions based on state regulations. However, appeals against other decisions of local government authorities are made directly to the administrative courts of appeal. Currently there is a debate about whether to make the county administrative courts the courts of first instance on a greater range of matters than is presently the case.

Special Courts

There are two types of special courts to be found in addition to the general and the administrative courts.

The first type consists of courts linked to the district courts such as water rights courts, maritime law courts and those courts which deal with cases heard under the Freedom of the Press Act.

The role of the second type of special court is a more independent one in relation to the general courts. The Labour Court has an important role to play in adjudicating labour law. Cases heard before the Market Court include matters relating to competition and anti-trust legislation.

The latter type of special courts were established to serve two main functions. They make it possible for expert testimony on matters which are frequently of a technical nature to be introduced into the administration of justice. The special courts also allow the interest groups to play a role, particularly in relation to the labour market organisations.

Lay Participation

Sweden has a long tradition of lay participation in the administration of justice. The panel of twelve laymen which dates from the Middle Ages used to exert a powerful influence over the decisions of the Things. The influence of lay assessors declined with the increasing professionalisation of local magistrates. The National Law Code of 1734, nevertheless, stipulated that the unanimous decision of the lay assessors could overrule that of the presiding magistrate. The lay panel had twelve members but could reach a decision with seven members present. In practice the members of the lay panel were appointed by the local courts. In 1823 the peasants won the right to take part in the election of the lay panel and this right was extended in 1872 to all those who were entitled to vote in local authority elections.

Nowadays the panel is made up of political appointees who serve as lay assessors in the district courts, the courts of appeal, the county administrative courts and the administrative courts of appeal. A lay assessor must be an adult Swedish citizen who is not a professional jurist. The lay assessors are appointed for three years. Lay assessors mainly serve in criminal cases and cases dealing with family law.

There are a few specific differences between the lay panel and the jury of the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition. In a jury system it is the jury which determines whether the accused is guilty or not guilty, after which the judge decides on sentencing and whatever sanctions should apply. In the Swedish system of lay participation the lay assessors reach a collective verdict together with the legally-trained judge and jointly decide on sentencing.

Lay influence is seen as a means of ensuring that the verdict of the courts is in keeping with the general legal philosophy of society. This applies to matters of general judgement and particularly in relation to sentencing and the evaluation of evidence. The participation of laymen is also justified with reference to the contribution they make to maintaining the confidence of the public in the administration of justice and because they provide the public with a means of monitoring the workings of the law courts.

The Europeanisation of the Law Courts

Today the Swedish legal system is going through a number of major changes as a direct consequence of the establishment of closer links with Europe. The most important influences have come both from the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, and from Community Law and the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

During the 1980s Sweden found itself increasingly arraigned for breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court of Human Rights found against Sweden in several cases and these verdicts have brought about a number of changes to the Swedish legal system. The requirements of the European Convention have led to the adoption of new rules on the arrest of suspects and on detention pending trial, to a greater use of oral procedures in courts of law as well as the review system for administrative regulations referred to previously.

There are two principal phases to the process of Swedish adaptation to the European Community and Union. The ratification of the EEA agreement, under the terms of which Sweden is obliged to accept Community law in certain areas, has already meant that a large number of new laws have come into force and that the methods for the interpretation and implementation of laws are being changed in certain respects.

The requirement for a uniform interpretation of international conventions has led to the increased use of the incorporative method. The alternative method, transformation, would require the reshaping of international regulations within domestic legal traditions. Incorporation involves the introduction of the legal text word for word, which is then accorded the same status as other domestic laws. European legislation is structured differently and employs a different use of language than the Swedish legal tradition. The powerful emphasis placed on written preparatory texts in the Swedish model is diminishing in importance. Instead growing importance is assigned to assimilating international legal practice. Issues of legal priority and jurisdiction are becoming increasingly important as are matters relating to the recognition and implementation of foreign judgements.

Membership of the EU would involve a certain limitation on the competence of the Supreme Courts in particular. They are not empowered to decide for themselves that Community laws are invalid. They are also obliged to solicit the verdict of the European Court of Justice on

the interpretation of Community law and such verdicts are binding. The system of binding interpretative verdicts issued by the European Court of Justice is incompatible with the current provisions of the Instrument of Government on the independence of the courts which state that no public authority may decide how a law court shall reach its decision in a particular case or how it should implement a regulation.

Membership of the EU would require an amendment to the Swedish Instrument of Government. An agreement reached between the political parties would allow the Instrument of Government to be amended so that the Riksdag can transfer decision-making power to the European Union. The amendment would also allow the entire body of existing Community law to be incorporated into Swedish law on the accession of Sweden to the Union. In practice the rules of the Union and its communities would take precedence over Swedish law. On one point, however, a reservation has been made. The transfer of decision-making power would only be valid as long as the European Union enjoys the same protection of rights and freedoms as laid down in the Instrument of Government.

10 Local Government

Exactly when the origins of self-government should be dated is a matter of controversy among students of Swedish history. Nevertheless there is unanimous agreement that for much of the Middle Ages a variety of forms of popular government existed at the various levels of the province, the hundred, the parish and the village. The expanding power of the nation state from the seventeenth century onwards meant that self-rule for the common people was increasingly suppressed, although to what extent is disputed. However, modern research has shown that local self-government was a more vital force in Sweden than in many other European countries.

Even though there is a long tradition of local rule, the renaissance in local self-government that took place in the nineteenth century involved a large element of newly-created institutions. Kinship with the older forms of self-rule is at best indirect. The county councils (*landsting*) were an entirely new invention; only their name connected them to their medieval counterparts. Although the rural municipalities were set up on the boundaries of the old church parishes, their responsibilities and their administrative structures were so different that it is also legitimate in their case to speak of newly-created bodies.

The local government reform of 1862 found a practical solution to the problematic relationship between the autonomy of local authorities and the supremacy of central government, which was to have lasting consequences. On the one hand the municipal councils (*kommuner*) were given a rather extensive and generally formulated area of authority and a free hand in raising taxation. On the other, the state was empowered to act against local councils that overstepped their area of

competence, mainly by means of intervention after the event. Some of the decisions of the municipal and county councils were made subject to ratification by a state body, usually the county administrative board, in order to become valid. Residents of a municipal authority area were given greater rights to appeal against the decisions of their local council and central government bodies were entitled to review the legality of such decisions.

The large-scale social changes that took place in the late nineteenth century and which can be summarised under the headings of industrialisation, urbanisation and democratisation imposed major new obligations on the local and regional authorities. The following hundred years were to be an era of continuous local government expansion. The growth of the population at the turn of the century, problems of provision during the First World War, the social deprivation of the inter-war years, crisis management during the Second World War and the welfare society of the post-war period were all the responsibility of the municipal councils. The state of the nation's health, the building of hospitals and rising health care expectations involved increased responsibilities for the county councils.

The new duties imposed on the municipal and county councils had major consequences for the internal management of the organs of self-government. During the nineteenth century local councils were run on a voluntary basis. The administration of both the urban and the rural local authorities was carried out by laymen. The increasing scale of their responsibilities meant that this particular administrative solution gradually became untenable. The towns and the larger municipal authorities began to employ officials to serve their needs. There was a gradual expansion of the administrative apparatus in both the municipal and county councils.

The most demanding aspects of this expansion both in terms of staff numbers and economic costs were related to the provision of health care, education, child care and the care of the elderly. Would the older local authorities, the smaller rural ones in particular, really have managed to finance, develop, staff and run all those grammar schools, nurseries and old people's homes? The Riksdag decided to introduce changes to the boundaries of the municipal authorities. The solution was to come in the form of amalgamation and reorganisation.

At the beginning of the 1950s Sweden had some 2,500 municipal authorities or communes. The "Great Reform of Local Government"

meant that this number was more than halved. The new units, however, soon proved to be too small and a plan to form a total of 300 or so municipalities was developed. At first the reform process was to be on a voluntary basis; the municipalities were encouraged to amalgamate. However, at local level there was considerable resistance and the voluntary principle was abandoned. Legislation made participation in the local government reform process mandatory. Since 1974 the country has been divided into just under 300 municipal authorities.

The amalgamation of the municipal authorities was part of a wider strategy to set up functional administrative units capable of implementing social reforms. The other strategic element was aimed at achieving efficiency through the mass production of services. Uniformity and standardisation would both raise and also serve to equalise the standard of welfare available to citizens. The philosophy of mass production had two conceptual sources. The lesson learnt from industry was that productivity was most favoured by large-scale enterprise. On the welfare theory side, the important principle was universalism – the idea that welfare reforms should include all citizens and not just particular groups. Universalism and equality would be achieved by uniform provision and standardisation. The orientation towards large-scale production derived from a compelling combination of commercial and ideological arguments.

The era of greatest expansion of the welfare state during the 1960s and 1970s was a very significant period for the municipalities. Old local authorities disappeared and new larger units were formed. Central government used rather heavy-handed management techniques to regulate the increasing responsibilities of the local authorities. Staff were recruited in droves to fill the newly-built schools, nurseries and care centres. Bureaucracy grew. These boom years were the high point of the process of social organisation which became known as the Swedish Model.

After more than a century of continuous expansion, the municipal authorities had become a considerable force in social life. In most municipalities the local authority had become the largest employer. The use of resources by the municipal authorities developed into a major factor in the economic life of Sweden. The general problem of improving efficiency and productivity was to be shaped to an increasing extent by the solutions arrived at by the municipalities.

The rapid pace of the expansion of the municipal authorities led in

turn to the development of new problems which in many cases had not been predicted by the engineers of reform. The anxiety soon arose that the new large municipalities had made gains in terms of efficiency but at the cost of democracy. Centralised control by the state brought with it increasing disadvantages and even as early as the 1970s the term decentralisation was on everyone's lips. In response to the large-scale bureaucracy of the municipal authorities, attempts were made to find alternative organisational solutions; the neighbourhood councils of the 1980s were an experiment of this kind. Expenditure problems led to savings having to be made and the setting of new priorities. New forms of organisational structure and privatisation were experimented with. Increasingly the economics of municipal government became the burning political issue.

Local Government Boundaries

Sweden is divided into 288 municipalities (1995). Just over one fifth of the municipalities have fewer than 10,000 inhabitants while a large number of rural municipalities are also sparsely populated.

There are 23 county councils. Special status is accorded the Stockholm county council with its one and a half million inhabitants. The areas under the authority of the county council are identical with the geographic boundaries of the counties themselves (*län*). However, there are three parts of the country which do not form part of county council areas. The municipalities in Gothenburg and Malmö and on the island of Gotland discharge the duties of the county council on behalf of the inhabitants of the respective municipality.

There is little dispute nowadays about the boundaries of the municipalities. Since the most recent major amalgamation took place only minor adjustments to the boundaries have been made. In contrast the status of the county councils is all the more controversial. The future of the county councils will depend on what model of health care provision is chosen. Some of the models being examined at present would involve the disappearance of the county councils.

The Powers of Local Government

The principle of local self-government is laid down in the very first article of the Instrument of Government. The constitution also asserts the right of the communes to levy taxes.

More detailed provisions are to be found in the Local Government Act passed by the Riksdag in 1991. A number of different laws were passed when the modern form of the municipality was first created in 1862: a law to cover county councils, another for rural municipalities and one for the towns and cities (together with a fourth for the church parishes). Nowadays a single act covers both municipal and county councils.

The Local Government Act can be seen as the “constitution” for local government at municipal and county level. In terms of strict legality the Act has no constitutional status (it is an ordinary law which may be changed by a simple decision of the Riksdag) but it does contain the fundamental provisions regulating the workings of the municipal and county councils. The Local Government Act sets out the rules which determine the boundaries of the local government authorities, their powers, organisation and the conduct of their affairs.

The purpose of the legislation currently in force is solely to provide the general provisions. By its very nature the Local Government Act is intended to be a framework law. This ensures that the local authorities are given greater freedom to determine for themselves their internal organisation. The Act is however relatively detailed when it comes to the decision-making procedures of the locally elected assembly and its executive committee.

Moreover there are a large number of additional laws which are of great importance in this context as they are the means by which the Government entrusts the local authorities with certain responsibilities. A major part of the activities of the local authorities is regulated by special legislation of this kind.

Three questions can be used to provide a summary of the information contained in the laws affecting local authorities at municipal and county level. What are local authorities obliged to do? The answer is contained in the responsibilities vested in the local authorities by state legislation. Secondly, what are local authorities able to do? The answer lies in the definition of local authority competence. The way the boundary is

drawn for the powers of local authorities leads naturally to the answer to the third question, namely what are local authorities not allowed to do? A major part of local authority law has been aimed at defining a number of criteria for the areas of operation prohibited to local authorities.

A distinction is usually drawn between mandatory and voluntary duties. Voluntary duties are those any local authority may take upon itself, provided that it lies within the general area of local authority competence. Mandatory duties are those the state imposes on the local authorities by special legislation. Seen in economic terms it is the latter which form the predominant category. Some 80 per cent of the activities of the local authorities are carried out in those areas determined by central government. This can be illustrated by a few examples.

The Health and Medical Services Act makes the county councils responsible for preventative health care for the residents of their counties. The aim is to promote good health and equal conditions of health care and medical services for the whole population. The county councils are also responsible for the planning of dental care.

The purpose of the Social Services Act of 1980 is to ensure that the national provision of social services "shall promote the fundamental economic and social security of individuals, equality in their living conditions and their active participation in social life. In consideration of the responsibility of the individual for his own social situation and for that of others, the provision of social services is to be aimed at liberating and developing the resources of both individuals and groups. These activities are to be founded on a respect for the autonomy and integrity of the individual." The Act lays down that it is the municipality that is responsible for social service within the district it serves. The individual is entitled to assistance so as "to ensure a reasonable standard of living". The Social Services Act also prescribes that the municipality should facilitate the individual's right to live at home and to have contacts with other people through the use of home helps, assisted travel services and other such means.

The municipalities are responsible for the provision of child care. Municipal authorities are also obliged to provide comprehensive, upper secondary and adult education. It is the municipalities which serve as the primary authority for comprehensive education. The municipalities and the county councils serve jointly as the authorities responsible for some

upper secondary and adult education. The municipalities are responsible for the teaching of Swedish to immigrants.

The Health Protection Act makes the municipalities responsible for monitoring developments within their districts in relation to the protection of both the environment and the health of the community and to intervene where necessary.

The Planning and Construction Act of 1987 increases the responsibilities of the local authorities in relation to building and construction activities. The Act obliges the local authorities to function as local planning authorities for land utilisation. The municipalities are also obliged to organise the emergency services and civil defence.

The restraints on the voluntary activities of the local authorities are determined by the local authority's competence. The general principle is formulated in the Local Government Act: "The municipalities and the county councils may attend to matters of general concern that are connected with the territory of the municipality or the county council or its inhabitants and which are not to be the sole charge of the state, of another municipality, another county council or of some other body". The key phrase here is "of general interest".

Certain basic principles have been developed through judicial practice which help to define this concept and so set limits to local authority competence. The principle of localisation means that whatever a municipality or county council does, must be linked to its territory or its inhabitants. The prohibition against supporting individuals means that the local authority may not act to the advantage of a particular individual; exceptions can only be made under special legislation such as the Social Services Act. The principle of equal treatment states that municipalities and county councils must treat their residents equally; this requirement carries particular force in relation to matters involving the exercise of public authority. The prohibition against running a speculative enterprise sets limits to the freedom of local authorities to run businesses: such operations must be not for profit and must be intended to provide services to the residents of the authorities concerned. The cost coverage principle means that the charges levied by the municipality, particularly in areas in which the authority enjoys a monopoly, may not be set so high that they produce a profit. The prohibition against decisions with retroactive effect is an expression of one of the fundamental principles of the rule of law.

The allocation of responsibilities between central and local govern-

ment has gone through a number of changes. In recent decades the main trend has been towards decentralisation. A considerable number of responsibilities have been transferred from central government to the municipalities and the county councils. While primary responsibility for education, for example, has been entrusted to the municipalities, the state has kept for itself the ultimate control.

Local and Regional Elections

Simultaneous elections for the Riksdag, the municipal councils and the county councils have been held since 1970. Elections were held every three years between 1970–1994. A four-year term of office has now been reintroduced.

Electoral participation in the general election is a few per cent higher than for the municipalities and the county councils. In the 1991 elections the turnout in the Riksdag election was 86.7 per cent, for the county council elections it was 84.3 per cent and the rate was the same for the municipal elections at 84.3 per cent. The lower level of electoral participation in the elections for the municipal and county councils is mainly due to the fact that permanently resident aliens, who are entitled to vote for the municipal and county councils but not for the Riksdag, have a lower rate of electoral participation than Swedish citizens.

Since the introduction of the joint election day in 1970 the differences between the votes cast for each party in parliamentary and local elections have been small but growing. Nevertheless as evidenced by the results of the elections, it would seem in the main that the parties win much the same proportion of votes in the parliamentary, county and municipal elections.

The most important explanation for the voting differences between the simultaneous elections is that an increasing number of voters are splitting their votes between different parties. The proportion of voters splitting their votes between different parties at the parliamentary and municipal levels rose from 6 to 22 per cent in the period 1970–1991. During the same period the proportion of voters splitting their votes between different parties at the parliamentary and county council elections rose from 4 to 19 per cent. This data is derived from interview surveys carried out after the elections.

The increase in vote splitting is the result of a combination of national and local political factors. Vote splitting is particularly widespread among voters who have a strong interest in politics but whose party identification is weak. The decision to vote for different parties is closely connected with a change of party affiliation. Vote splitting is an example of the general increase in the volatility of the electorate. Vote splitting rises when there is a greater measure of preparedness to separate local political considerations from national political sympathies. Fears that a joint election day would lead to the disappearance of political activity at local level given the greater importance of national political issues have proved false in this regard.

Local Parties

The increasing volatility and scepticism of voters have mainly affected the established parties. At the municipal level there are an increasing number of locally-based parties. Election statistics show that the proportion of "other" parties in municipal elections over a twenty year period has risen from 0.5 to almost 3 per cent. Minor parties are currently represented on a third of Sweden's municipal councils. Some of these minor parties have national political ambitions, but the vast majority are of purely local character. Where neither bloc has a clear majority, local parties may hold the balance of power. An example of this was provided by the Stockholm Party in 1979. The Scania Party gained 7 per cent in Malmö at the municipal election in 1985, but subsequently the fortunes of the party went into decline.

Until the end of the 1980s the electoral system managed to produce clear majorities on county councils in the majority of cases. However, the elections of 1988 introduced a new state of affairs. Gains by the Greens meant that they held the balance of power on several county councils. There was no clear majority on 9 out of 23 county councils. The proportional electoral system and the fragmentation of the political parties increased the difficulties involved in forming majorities based on the established political blocs. The minor parties had made their first serious impact on county council politics.

A survey of the majority position at municipal level shows that the changes have been identical to those taking place on county councils. At the beginning of the 1970s it was very unusual for one of the two

traditional political blocs to fail to gain a majority. Almost a quarter of the municipalities lacked a clear majority situation after the elections of 1988. The number of municipalities with a Socialist majority was lower after the election in 1991 than at any time since the current municipalities were first established.

Local Referenda

With the final abolition in 1952 of the community meeting as the supreme decision-making body in the municipality, popular referenda have become the most significant elements of direct democracy in the conduct of local government. The debate over municipal referenda has been a lively one, but this form of direct influence by the public has normally been of little consequence in municipal decision-making. Popular referenda are only used in exceptional circumstances and for special issues.

The Local Government Act stipulates that as part of the preparation of an issue councillors may seek to consult the residents of a municipality or county. This can be done by means of “a referendum, opinion survey or similar process.” Local government referenda are solely consultative. The final decision lies with the council

In 1994 the Riksdag decided that five per cent of registered voters in a municipality or county council area could call for a referendum on a particular matter. The aim is to increase public interest and involvement in various social issues. However, it is ultimately the municipal or county council which decides whether the referendum will be held and how the question will be formulated. Local government referenda will continue to be purely consultative.

Organisational Structure

Nowadays the municipalities and the county councils enjoy considerable freedom to determine their own organisational structure. The Local Government Act lays down only a number of minimum requirements. The principles of representative democracy require that the elected representatives, the councillors, constitute the highest decision-making body of the local government authority. In order to prepare and

implement decisions the councillors appoint an Executive Committee as well as other committees. In addition, every county and municipal council is required to appoint auditors to scrutinise the workings of the council.

Elected Representatives

The task of the elected councillors is to make decisions on all matters of principal importance or of major significance for the municipal or county council. It is the elected councillors who decide the goals and the guidelines for the activities of the council and who establish the economic parameters through the budget they draw up and the taxes they levy. The elected councillors determine the organisational structure and the working methods of the council, they also elect the members of the Executive Committee and the other committees. The number of councillors elected to a local government authority may range from 31 to 71 members; although Stockholm's city council has 101 members. As a result of the elections held in 1991, 43 per cent of elected county councillors are women and women account for 34 per cent of municipal representatives.

The Executive Committee

The task of the Executive Committee is to lead and coordinate the administration of the affairs of the county or municipal council and to monitor its other activities. The Executive Committee is the preparatory body of the council which means that it has to prepare and report on matters to be presented to the assembly of the elected councillors for their decision. The Executive Committee is normally also in charge of the economic administration of the council. In practice the Executive Committee is the body with the greatest power in the municipality. The structure of Stockholm's municipal administration is slightly different. The city's board of commissioners (*borgarrådsberedning*) is the centre of political power.

Administration

Previously the organisation of the work of the council committees was fairly uniform throughout the country's various municipalities. There were detailed central government regulations as to which committees municipal and county councils were obliged to appoint. Currently a greater degree of variation exists. During the 1980s attempts were made in the larger municipalities to increase democratic involvement and improve efficiency by setting up sub-municipal bodies. Neighbourhood councils (*kommundelsnämnd*) of this kind are to be found in just over twenty municipalities. However, it is still the norm for the responsibilities of the council committees to be linked to specific sectors, such as the committee for the care of the elderly, the children's and education committees, the planning committee, the environmental affairs committee as well as the arts and recreation committee.

Once the financial situation of the municipalities had become increasingly acute, many municipal and county councils were forced to try out new organisational structures. The debate on the nature of the role of the politicians has also brought about changes. Politicians were situated, in formal terms, at the apex of a vast pyramid of power relations, but in reality had very little scope for bringing influence to bear. The current solution to this problem involves a clearer separation of roles and functions. The new organisational structure distinguishes between purchasers on the one hand and providers on the other. Within the municipal authority, the political role is identified with the purchasers – the municipal committees which control the funds and buy services from the various suppliers. The providers – those who produce or supply various amenities – may be council committees, enterprises owned by the municipal or county council, private companies or other entrepreneurs.

This new model has brought with it an increase in competitiveness. In principle the purchasing committees are free to purchase from whichever supplier offers the most advantageous terms. One of the main aims of the new organisational structure is to provide politicians with a new role. Elected representatives should no longer head the various administrative structures and direct different forms of production. Instead the aim is for politicians to concentrate on their role as the representatives of the public.

In the long term the system should contain a greater element of free

choice for the individual citizen. Instead of being referred to a particular school or health centre members of the public will be given the option of choosing one for themselves. One method involves giving members of the public an education voucher or health care cheque which gives access to the institution of their choice.

With this organisational structure in operation schools, clinics or day-care centres can no longer rely on automatically receiving funding through taxation year after year. The revenue of the institution will depend on the choices made by the public and the negotiations of the purchasing committees. The goal is for increased competition to lead to improved cost awareness and greater efficiency.

Finances

Municipalities and county councils have developed into factors of major importance for the whole of the domestic economy. Throughout the 1980s a crucial aspect of economic policy was the attempt to rein back the rise in municipal and county council expenditure. Today this policy of belt-tightening has become even more important. Public sector activities have to be reoriented from a mode of expansion to one based on stagnant revenues. The tax funds at the disposal of the municipalities will not be able to rise at the same rate as demand for the sort of services the municipalities are charged with providing. Organisational structures and methods of financing will be forced to undergo major changes.

By far the most important source of revenue for both municipalities and county councils is local government taxation. Two thirds of the income of county councils comes from taxation while local government taxes provide roughly half the income of the municipalities. The next most important source of revenue is the support grant from central government, ie central government tax revenues that are passed on to the municipalities and the county councils. The county councils also receive compensatory payments from the national health insurance scheme.

Local government tax rates varied between 26.5 and 33.5 per cent in 1994; the average was 31 per cent. Municipal taxes accounted for 18 per cent, the county councils for around 12 per cent and church parish tax for around 1 per cent.

Legislation freezing local government taxation was introduced as part

of the Social Democratic Government's crisis measures of 1991. The effect of this law was extended until the end of 1993. Although the Council of Legislation and the Riksdag's Constitutional Committee considered that intervention by the Government in the field of local government taxation had to be carried out with great discretion and considerable caution, they did not hold that the legislation was in conflict with the constitution. The limits set on local self-government are defined solely in very general terms and in practice it is the state which has the final say on their exact interpretation.

A new system of central government support grants is being introduced with effect from 1993. Previously the state laid down detailed provisions as to how the grants were to be made use of by the municipalities and the county councils. From now on the funds are to be allocated as a general block grant and not item by item. The aim of the uniform state grant is to provide the municipalities and the county councils with greater freedom of action in structuring their operations and more scope for establishing priorities among their various areas of operation. In addition the new system will make it easier for the state to reduce the size of the grants made to the municipalities and the county councils.

More than half of the expenditure of the municipalities and county councils is spent on wages. The single most significant effect of the expansion of the local government sector was that the municipalities and the county councils employed more staff. Now that the current financial situation demands savings and cutbacks, dismissals and a freeze on new employment are frequently the result.

The allocation of the expenditure mirrors the areas of responsibility of the county councils and the municipalities. Health care and medical services account for more than three quarters of county council expenditure. The expenditure of the municipalities is distributed among several areas but education, the care of the elderly and of children accounts for just over half of what the average citizen pays in tax to the municipality.

The Accountability of the Municipalities

The main trend in recent years has been for the municipalities to be given responsibility for an increasing number of areas of public affairs

while there has been a simultaneous widening of the parameters within which the municipalities themselves decide how their activities should be structured. The policy of the state towards the municipalities has shifted from management by regulation in detail to management by objectives.

The general idea is that the state retains the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that public services meet the requirements of the rule of law and the general political objectives set out by the Riksdag. This system means that the freedom of action enjoyed by the municipalities is tempered by accountability. The state has various means at its disposal for intervening with sanctions against local government authorities that exceed their powers.

Appeals against Local Government Authorities

As previously mentioned the reform of local government which was carried out in 1862 was based on the idea that the municipalities and the county councils should be in charge of their own affairs on condition that the "members" (residents) of the municipalities and counties could appeal against the decisions of their local authority if they felt that the local authority had exceeded its powers. The entitlement to appeal against the decision of a local authority has a long history and can be traced back to the ancient right to petition the sovereign.

Administrative law in Sweden distinguishes between two types of appeal, administrative appeals and local government appeals.

Administrative appeals are made against the decisions of public authorities and against those decisions made by municipalities and county councils which are based on special legislation such as the Social Services Act and the Health and Medical Services Act. The right of appeal in administrative cases is vested solely in the person or persons directly affected by the decision. In the case of administrative appeals the courts can assess the legality of a decision, ie whether it has been made in a judicially correct way, as well as the appropriateness of the decision. In cases of this kind the appeal court may both revoke and amend the decision.

Local government appeals are a form of civil complaint. The aim is to ensure that local self-government is carried out with regard to due process. Local government appeals differ from administrative appeals in

a number of important respects. While only the person or persons directly affected by the decision are entitled to appeal against administrative decisions, any resident in a local authority can appeal against a local government decision. Administrative appeals may involve a review of both the legality and the appropriateness of the decision; local government appeals, however, only involve a review of the legality of the decision. The decisions may only be reviewed on those points laid down in the Local Government Act. Appeals against administrative decisions may result in both the revoking or emendation of the decisions while appeals against local government decisions can only result in their revocation.

The entitlement to a review of a decision by the municipality or county council is restricted to the residents of the local authority concerned. Interested parties, who are not resident in the local authority, have no right to file a local government appeal. However, any resident of the local authority area concerned, whether affected by the decision or not, may appeal against it.

Central Government Oversight

The directives issued to several public authorities contain instructions to monitor the way municipalities and county councils discharge their duties. Examples of the areas monitored in this way include education, construction and planning and environmental protection. The county administrative boards exercise a general supervisory role over a whole range of municipal activities.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Attorney General exercise supervision not just over central government but over local government authorities as well, ie over municipal committees and the executive bodies and the officials who serve the committees. They may not amend a municipal decision but have the right to prosecute malfeasance, to issue memoranda against decisions and to make declarations of principle.

Cooperation among Local Authorities

In order to meet some of their responsibilities neighbouring local government authorities may form legally regulated associations of local government authorities (*kommunalförbund*) or enter formal agreements to cooperate with one another.

Both the municipalities and the county councils have formed organisations of their own to look after their interests. The Swedish Association of Municipal Authorities and the Swedish Federation of County Councils are purely voluntary associations. Nevertheless all municipalities and county councils are members of their respective associations which have acquired a semi-official status as the representatives of the local government authorities.

As interest organisations their role is to represent the interests of the municipalities and the county councils, primarily in relation to other political bodies, but also with the aim of influencing public opinion in a more general way. The associations also provide various services to the municipalities and county councils. In their roles as employer organisations the associations combine both these functions and take part in negotiations with the trade unions representing local government employees.

The municipalities and the county councils are also represented at the international level through their national associations. Associations have been formed for municipalities and county councils at both global and European level. In addition to formal cooperative alliances of this kind there are also a number of other forms of international local government cooperation.

A network of direct links between the local and regional levels on the one hand and European institutions on the other has already been established for informal contacts, pressure groups and lobbyists. Several Swedish local government authorities, either on their own or in cooperation with other authorities, now maintain a permanent form of representation in Brussels. Regional associations, such as those for Scania, the Mälars Valley and the West Coast of Sweden have been formed to represent the municipalities, county councils and county administrations in the area concerned.

A large measure of inter-regional cross-border cooperation has already been established. Cross-border cooperation of this kind is taking

place in the Arctic Area, the Barents Sea region, the Kvarken Area, Mittnorden, the Arvika-Kongsvinger region, between the archipelagic communities in Stockholm, Åland and Åboland, within the Öresund region and between Bornholm and Scania. The development of transnational networks of local government bodies exemplifies the internationalisation of the political system.

Local Government and the Public

Until now much of the debate on local government has been primarily concerned with the “upward” dimension of the relations of the local government authorities to the state or to transnational agencies. However, attention is increasingly being focused on the “downward” relations of the local government authorities – to individual members of the public or to groups of citizens.

While the autonomy of local government is being extended in relation to the state, demands for greater freedom of choice for individuals are also being made. There are various ways of meeting these demands for greater choice. Some of these methods are based on retaining the public sector in its present form. In this scenario, freedom of choice can be achieved by giving the individual greater freedom to choose among schools, day-care centres and hospitals etc, all of which would still be run as public services.

But it would also be possible to go one step further and transfer the production of services to bodies which are more or less autonomous in relation to the administration of local government. Previously it was already possible for child care facilities to be run by parental cooperatives. After the non-Socialist parties came to power in 1991, the law was changed to allow day-care centres for children to be run as commercial enterprises.

The trend at present is towards a greater number of alternative forms of operation, running in parallel with one another. The individual citizen may, for example, by means of an educational voucher choose to attend a school run privately, or by the municipality or county council, or run as a cooperative or in some other form of enterprise.

The extension of this trend would mean a relatively diminished role

for the municipalities and county councils. At stake here is a historic change to the division of responsibilities between the municipalities and county councils on the one hand and civil society on the other. The term "civil society" is used to describe the autonomous forms of organisation which exist between individuals and the public administration. Civil society is made up of associations, cooperatives, churches, the mass media etc. For many years it was the municipalities and the county councils which little by little took over the duties previously discharged by voluntary associations. Now the trend is in the opposite direction. The associational impetus together with cooperative and individual initiatives are being seen as alternatives to management by municipal and county councils.

The universal trend towards decentralisation, management by objectives, greater local government autonomy and privatisation is sometimes viewed with dismay. In this context attention is being focused on the vital issues of principle involved in the treatment of the disabled. In the debate on the plight of the disabled, for example, warnings have been voiced that the increasing scale of the difference of resources between the local authorities may lead to different standards of provision for individuals with special needs. Individual members of the public who find it difficult to influence local politics because of their particular situation may be made wholly dependent on the good will of the local political majority. One idea put forward is to strengthen the power of the individual citizen by implementing precisely formulated central government provisions while leaving the authorities free to design operations at local level to meet the needs of the individual. Under the new legislation on the rights of disabled people which came into force in 1994, persons with severe functional impairments are entitled to various services including those of personal attendants.

In this way the state can strengthen the power of the individual through legislated rights at the cost of the autonomy of local government. The greater the precision with which the rights of the individual are formulated in legislation and the greater the efficiency of the accompanying system of sanctions, the less the freedom of action enjoyed by the municipal and county councils charged with maintaining those rights.

II The Political Parties

It was in the eighteenth century during the Age of Liberty that an early form of parliamentary government and a system of political parties first developed. The division of members of the Riksdag into Hats and Caps established the blueprint for parliamentary groupings based on common political views. However, these were not political parties in the modern sense with all that implies of a permanent organisational structure. The development of parties as we know them did not begin until 1866 and the reform of parliamentary representation. The Agrarian Party of the Lower House was to be increasingly imitated. Initially the parties were parliamentary caucuses first and foremost. Gradually nationwide organisations of voters developed. The conflicts over free trade, suffrage and national defence played a significant role in helping to politicise society and mobilise the masses. The efforts of the labour movement also helped to set the pattern for recruitment. Industrialisation, parliamentary government, democratisation and the formation of political parties were simultaneous processes, which were also interlinked to a considerable degree. The introduction of proportional representation between 1907 and 1909 also facilitated the birth of new parties. By the time universal suffrage was introduced for both men and women at the beginning of the 1920s the system of political parties had developed an organised structure the principal features of which would still be recognisable today. The subsequent period has been marked by a number of modifications of the established parties and most recently by the advent of new parties (see Appendix 1).

The Moderate Party

At the beginning of this century conservative and moderate groups combined to form a single party. In 1969 the name of this party was changed from the Party of the Right to the Moderate Party (*Moderata samlingspartiet*). The Moderates made major electoral gains during the 1970s and 1980s to become the largest of the non-Socialist parties.

Support for the Moderates is greatest in the cities and the surrounding suburbs. The Moderates are the largest party in Stockholm. The electoral core of the party is made up of middle-class men from the private sector.

The party's leaders in recent decades have been Jarl Hjalmarsson, Gunnar Heckscher, Yngve Holmberg, Gösta Bohman, Ulf Adelsohn and, since 1986, Carl Bildt.

The Liberal Party

Originally the Liberal Party evolved out of groups advocating free trade and other liberal issues in the Riksdag of the late nineteenth century. The issue the party championed above all others was the struggle for universal suffrage. In the 1920s the Liberals split over Prohibition but were reunited in 1934 under their modern name (*Folkpartiet*, later *Folkpartiet liberalerna*). During the years following the Second World War, the Liberals were the leading opposition party but subsequently lost electoral support.

The Liberals are primarily a party of salaried officials, especially private sector salaried employees. Party leaders have included Bertil Ohlin, Sven Wedén, Gunnar Helén, Per Ahlmark, Ola Ullsten and Bengt Westerberg (who resigned after the election in 1994).

The Centre Party

The modern farmers' movement was first organised during the 1910s. It was united under the banner of the Agrarian Party in 1921. For several decades the party attracted around a tenth of the votes, but the party subsequently lost support as the number of agricultural workers declined. At the beginning of the 1970s the Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*) won considerable support on issues such as decentralisation, the environment and opposition to nuclear power.

Voters for the Centre Party are found mostly in rural areas and farmers are still a key group.

The most recent party leaders have been Gunnar Hedlund, Thorbjörn Fälldin, Karin Söder and Olof Johansson.

The Christian Democrats

The Christian Democrats (*Kristdemokratiska samhällspartiet*) were formed in 1964 as a reaction to the secularisation of society. A number of Pentecostal pastors were prominent among the founders of the party. The ideology of the party is based on Christian values. It was to be a long wait before the party entered parliament. In the elections of 1985 the party managed to get one seat in the Riksdag on a Centre Party list. The party's current name dates from 1987. In 1991 the Christian Democrats managed to clear the electoral threshold on their own and so gain seats in the Riksdag. It was only by the barest of margins that the party succeeded in maintaining its parliamentary representation at the 1994 election.

The Christian Democrats have a particularly strong core of support among Christian voters and attract an above average proportion of their votes in the non-denominational or Free Church county of Jönköping. The first party leader of the party was Birger Ekstedt, who was succeeded in 1973 by Alf Svensson.

The Social Democrats

The Social Democratic and Labour Party (*Socialdemokratiska arbetarepartiet*, SAP) was formed in 1889 as part of the labour movement's struggle for political power. The Social Democrats gained ground in 1921 in the elections following the introduction of universal suffrage and the party's candidates for Prime Minister were in office broadly speaking for an unbroken period between 1932 and 1976.

Although the electoral basis of the Social Democrats has expanded over the years their strongest support is still to be found among trade union organised workers. A vital electoral group nowadays is made up of women working in the public sector.

The first leader of the party was Hjalmar Branting. In 1925 Per Albin Hansson became party leader, followed in 1946 by Tage Erlander, in 1969 by Olof Palme and in 1986 by Ingvar Carlsson.

The Left Party

At the Social Democratic party congress in 1917 a revolutionary group broke away to form their own party. This party subsequently joined the Communist International and adopted the name of the Communist Party. In the final phase of the Second World War the party gained just over ten per cent of the votes, but has otherwise managed to attract between four and five per cent of the votes cast in general elections. In 1967 the party renamed itself the Left Communist Party and changed name once more in 1990 to the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*).

Having once been a workers' party, the core support group for the Left Party is now made up of public sector employees, notably in health, education and welfare.

Sven Linderot, Hilding Hagberg, C.H. Hermansson, Lars Werner and Gudrun Schyman have been the leaders of the party.

The Greens

The Green Party (*Miljöpartiet de gröna*) which first campaigned in the general elections of 1982 has its origins in the campaign against nuclear power, which was formed for the referendum on that issue held in 1980. Green parties with a similar ecological program appeared simultaneously in many other industrialised countries. The party entered the Riksdag in 1988 but at the 1991 election failed to clear the four per cent threshold. The Greens re-entered parliament at the 1994 election.

Electoral support for the Greens is fairly evenly distributed across the country and among different population groups, but with a slight preponderance among public sector salaried employees.

The Greens wanted to avoid a party organisation controlled from the top and opted instead to have two spokespersons leading the party for a year at a time.

New Democracy

Protest parties campaigning against high taxation, state bureaucracy and immigration were formed at the beginning of the 1970s in Denmark and Norway. In the spring of 1991 two entrepreneurs Ian Wachtmeister and Bernt Karlson decided to set up a Swedish counterpart. The party, which was called New Democracy (*Ny demokrati*), succeeded in captur-

ing media attention and rapidly gained support in the opinion polls. At the general election held that very same year, the party entered the Riksdag with 6.7 per cent of the votes.

The party was split by internal dissension and suffered defections. The party leader resigned in the spring of 1994 and at the general election that same year the party gained so few votes that it lost its parliamentary seat.

From Five Parties to Eight

It has been common practice to characterise summarily the party systems of the Nordic countries as five-party systems divided into two blocs. The Socialist bloc consists of two parties, a reformist Social Democratic party and a Communist or left-Socialist party. The non-Socialist bloc is made up of conservative and liberal wings and includes a farming, agrarian party.

In very general terms this model has proved valid for describing the party system for most of the twentieth century. The structure of political parties remained remarkably stable for the six decades that followed the advent of full democracy in the 1920s.

In recent years the combined share of the vote of the five established parties has fallen. Evidence for the increasing volatility of the party system is also reflected in the advent of new parties. The most recent elections have seen three new parties enter the Riksdag. In the course of a relatively short space of time the party system has been transformed from a five-party to an eight-party system.

The Organisational Structure of the Parties

During the developmental phase of the party system, there were significant differences in the internal structure of the various parties. In general terms it may be said that the labour parties were structured as mass organisations while the non-Socialist parties were formed as parliamentary groupings. These differences were gradually ironed out and the parties now have broadly similar organisational structures. The differences that can still be clearly observed relate on the whole to size; a

larger party can obviously possess a more differentiated internal organisation.

The basic unit of a political party is a local branch usually based on the geographic boundaries of the municipality; the larger parties may also have party groups in city wards. Local branches form part of a district party, the district is normally based on the county and is usually identical with the electoral constituency. The district party, in some cases the local branches as well, elect representatives to the supreme decision-making body of the national party, sometimes known as the party congress, sometimes as the national assembly or some similar name.

The party congresses of most political parties assemble every third year, usually in the year preceding a general election year. During the period in which the congress is not sitting, a smaller assembly usually serves as the party's supreme decision-making body. The party congress elects a committee to serve as its executive. Since this body may be rather large and meets relatively infrequently, in practice there is normally a smaller executive board that looks after the day to day management of affairs. The position of party chairman is generally a very powerful one.

Until now the scope for voting for particular individuals has been a very weak feature of the Swedish electoral system and as a result it is the nominations of the district party that determine which individuals are elected to the Riksdag. The local branches of the party perform the same important function for recruiting the elected members of the municipal council. Those elected as representatives of a particular party form an organised group; the parliamentary groups, for example, elect a leadership and have a chancery at their disposal. There are close links and personal alliances between the national organisation of a party and its parliamentary group.

In recent years the Swedish political parties have broadened and strengthened their international links. There have long been powerful links between the parties in the Nordic countries. Since the 1950s the Nordic Council has played a key role in developing a network linking parliamentarians in the Nordic parliaments. The process of European integration has also hastened the development of links between Swedish political parties and their sister organisations in continental Europe. At the international level the Social Democrats have long enjoyed organised mutual ties to the Socialist International. The other parties have now developed corresponding international contacts of their own.

Public Funding for Political Parties

State subsidies for political parties were introduced in 1965 on the understanding that the financing of the parties was in the general public interest. The aim of state funding for parties is to strengthen the role of the parties in the formation of public opinion and so strengthen democracy in action. The other aims of the subsidy system were to prevent dependence on individual backers, to equalize the differences in funding between the parties and to facilitate continuous contact between the parties and the electorate.

In 1972 after agreement had been reached between the parties a law on public funding for political parties was adopted. Its general principles are that subsidy is only given to parties that enjoy a considerable measure of support among the electorate as evidenced in general elections, that the subsidies are allocated according to fixed rules and based on the strength of the parties, that the state may not control how the funds are used and that the municipalities and county councils may decide for themselves if they wish to contribute to the funding of the political parties.

State subsidy for political parties which took part in the general election takes the form of funding for the national party together with support for the party's chancery. Party subsidy is based on the number of seats won, or on the number of votes cast in the case of parties which have failed to enter the Riksdag but have gained more than 2.5 per cent of the votes. The legislation contains special rules which provide for a gradual phasing-out of subsidy for parties which lose a large number of votes.

The Local Government Act allows municipalities and county councils to provide subsidies for parties represented in their elected assemblies. The subsidies may either be allocated on the basis of strict proportionality or as a combination of a basic subsidy plus a subsidy for each seat won.

State subsidy for the parties was 195 million SEK in 1992. Municipal councils provided subsidies for the parties amounting to 301 million SEK, while county councils subsidised the parties to the tune of 181 million SEK that same year.

In addition to this form of public subsidy the political parties also receive other grants, such as grants for education, subsidies for the

youth organisations of the parties as well as administrative assistance for those elected to office.

Participation in Elections

For many years the number of enfranchised voters as a proportion of the adult population as a whole was tiny. Large sections of the population had no right to vote and the level of participation in elections was low. Until the beginning of the twentieth century less than half of those entitled to vote did so. It was to be some time before the major new electoral groups, women in particular, were mobilised to cast their votes. The difference in the rate of turnout between the cities and the rural areas was considerable for many years; not until the beginning of the 1930s did the rural areas reach the turnout levels seen in the towns and cities.

Looked at over the last hundred years electoral participation has tended to rise but this trend has not been uniform. Political debate has often been particularly charged prior to certain elections and as a result more voters than usual have cast a vote. In the two most recent decades electoral turnout has been on average just under 90 per cent.

Voting Behaviour

Women

For the greater part of the period during which it has been possible to examine voting behaviour through interview surveys, there has been hardly any link between gender and voting. The choice of party made by women and men is usually all but identical.

Differences have, however, increased at the most recent elections. The Social Democrats have had a slight, and yet statistically significant, preponderance among women, especially women in the public sector at certain elections. The Moderates and New Democracy are more strongly supported by men than by women.

Age

Generational differences are fairly small in Swedish politics. Broadly speaking younger voters vote in the same way as older ones. There are some variations, however. As previously mentioned, the Left Party did particularly well during the 1970s among younger graduates; this generational linkage can still be discerned. Fifty years ago the Social Democrats were more strongly supported by younger than by older voters; this situation has now been reversed.

Social Class

The link between occupational category and choice of party is pronounced but diminishing. In comparison with other countries the Swedish party system is distinguished by a high level of class voting. Factors such as language, religion or geographic region play only a minor role in this regard. The occupation of the voter is still very significant in determining party choice.

But the link between class and party has tended to weaken in recent decades. Seventy three per cent of workers voted for a party in the Socialist bloc at the election in 1956 while the corresponding proportion among the middle classes was 22 per cent; this difference of 51 per cent is evidence of a high degree of class-based voting. The corresponding proportions were 57 and 32 per cent respectively at the elections held in 1991; the index of class voting had fallen to 25 per cent.

Social changes have introduced new occupational categories without a strong party political linkage. This change in the social structure is an important explanatory factor for the diminishing extent of class voting, but not the only one. Among established occupational categories, it has also become more usual to vote against established party political traditions.

Increased Volatility

The decrease in class-based voting and the growing proportion of voters switching their party allegiance are only two signs of the growing volatility of the electorate. Interview surveys have also revealed that fewer and fewer voters consider themselves to be permanent adherents of a particular party. At the elections held in 1968 65 per cent of voters

identified with a particular party; in 1991 the proportion of party adherents had fallen to 48 per cent.

The same developmental trend can be noted in relation to the timing of the decision about which way to vote. Post-election interviews make clear that an increasing number of people are delaying making a final decision on which party to vote for until the last few weeks immediately preceding the election. The proportion of voters who decided their choice of party during the election campaign rose from 18 to 51 per cent between 1964 and 1991.

Interviews also reveal that distrust of parties and politicians has been rising since the 1960s. In 1968 37 per cent agreed with the statement that the political parties were only interested in winning votes and not in the views of the voters. At the elections held in 1991 the proportion of those agreeing with this statement had risen to 70 per cent. The widening gulf between members of the public and the established institutions, which has also been remarked in other spheres of society and in other countries, has been particularly marked in relation to the Swedish political parties.

As a result a decreasing proportion of voters can be categorised as stable voters. An increasing number of voters are undecided even at the beginning of the campaign just over a month before election day. In consequence the way the parties run their election campaigns and the attention paid by the mass media have come to play an increasingly important role in determining the outcome of elections.

12 Voluntary Organisations

The development of organised groups existing independently of the state is not a new phenomenon. The guilds and other forms of corporation date from the Middle Ages. Modern forms of associational activity are usually dated from the middle of the nineteenth century. In the course of the following one hundred and fifty years Swedish organisations have grown both in number and in kind.

The Free Church Movement

The earliest organised movements had a religious basis. People gathered together to hold religious services outside the authority of the Lutheran church in protest against the stultified ceremonial of the established church.

The largest non-conformist groups today are the Pentecostals, the Mission Covenant church, the Salvation Army, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Örebro Mission Society, the Baptists' Union and the Methodist church.

New churches are now being set up outside the established Free church movement; the foremost example during the 1980s was the Word of Life organisation. Immigrant churches have also become part of religious life, as practised outside the Church of Sweden.

The Temperance Movement

The initiatives that led to the foundation of the first temperance groups came from abroad, as was also the case for a number of the Free

churches. A large number of new temperance associations were set up during the nineteenth century. The temperance movement has been described as the first social movement in Sweden.

After its defeat in the referendum on the prohibition of alcohol in 1922, the temperance movement came increasingly to resemble a national pressure group. The movement's links with the state became ever stronger while the size of its membership was to stagnate.

The Trade Union Movement

It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that a number of workers' associations were first set up; their orientation was primarily liberal. The birth of the modern trade union movement, however, is usually dated to the 1880s. Industrialisation and urbanisation had got going by then and the growing working class managed to fashion for itself an organisation of a more permanent kind.

The Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (*LO*), was set up in 1898 as an umbrella organisation for the growing number of trade unions. The foundation of the trade union movement was closely connected with the advent of social democracy as a political force. Initially affiliation to the Social Democratic Party was mandatory for the trade union movement. A clearer division of labour between the unions and the party was implemented at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the close bonds between the labour movement's trade union and political wings have been retained; collective membership was not abolished until the end of the 1980s.

How was the trade union movement to be constructed? There were two organisational systems on offer. Organisation on the occupational principle meant that trade unions were formed by their members on the basis of a common occupation. Organisation on the industrial principle meant that every worker at the same workplace, irrespective of their occupation, could belong to the same union. The Swedish trade union movement combines elements of both organisational principles, although the industrial principle has long been the dominant method; the Metalworkers' Union, the Municipal Workers Union and State Employees' Union are all examples of Swedish unions formed on the industrial principle.

During the twentieth century the organisational structure of the

Swedish trade union movement has been shaped by the forces of centralisation and integration. In contrast to many other countries with more fragmented labour organisations, LO has long been in a position of considerable power in Sweden.

The organisation of white-collar employees into trade unions independent of LO took place at a considerably later date than that of blue-collar workers. The higher-ranking civil servants formed their own association in 1910. Professional employees in the private sector formed a separate national association in 1931. The various associations of white-collar workers in the private sector, central government and local authority labour markets combined to form The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (*TCO*) in 1944. The supreme body representing the associations of graduate employees was formed in 1947 as the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (*SACO*).

Sweden has the highest level of trade union organisation among the OECD-countries. Although the proportion of employees who are members of a trade union fell slightly during the 1980s, it had risen again to ca. 85 per cent by the beginning of the 1990s.

Industrial Associations

Liberalisation and freedom of trade meant that the guild system was abolished in 1846 and 1864. Subsequently craftsmen and workers in other trades were to be organised on a voluntary basis. The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed a lively formation of organisations in trade and industry. Local occupational and industrial sector organisations were frequently to exert considerable influence over political life.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the organisation of workers into trade unions forced the employers to form an association of their own. The Swedish Employers' Confederation (*SAF*) was formed in 1902 as a coordinating body. In addition to the employers' associations there are a large number of other forms of organisation within trade and industry. The aim of the Federation of Swedish Industries is to promote the interests of industry, particularly in relation to the state. National associations also exist for smaller and medium-sized companies as well as for individual retailers. Campaigning organisations, marketing organisations, chambers of commerce, research institutes and foundations are also to be found operating in trade and industry.

The Cooperative Movement

The first cooperative societies in Sweden were started in the 1850s. Towards the end of the last century the cooperative idea was taken up by the labour movement and several workers' consumer cooperatives were founded. Once the movement had achieved a degree of permanency, it was decided to form a central organisation in 1899, the Swedish Cooperative Union (*KF*).

The movement to set up producer cooperatives was to be most significant in the agricultural sector. In agriculture the economic association movement was to assume a dominant role in the industry. A number of cooperative dairies and abattoirs were set up towards the end of the nineteenth century. Purchasing and sales organisations were combined to form the Swedish Farmers' Supply and Crop Marketing Association. The cooperative movement was given a powerful impetus by the agricultural crisis of the 1930s when a national organisation of agricultural cooperatives was formed and christened the Swedish Farmers Union. The National Farmers' Union was set up as an agricultural organisation to serve as a kind of trade union wing of the farming movement. The two organisations subsequently amalgamated to form the Federation of Swedish Farmers (*LRF*).

The relatively powerful position of housing cooperatives is a distinguishing feature of the housing market in Sweden. The Tenants' Saving and Building Society (*HSB*) was set up in the 1920s as an embodiment of the idea that tenants should own and manage their residences for themselves.

Voluntary Educational Associations

The traditional working methods of the Swedish social movements have always included self-tuition and the use of the study circle. With the passage of time special organisations were established for adult education on a voluntary basis. Folk high schools, lecture societies and workers' institutes were all set up at the end of the nineteenth century. The dominant organisations in charge of this form of adult education are closely connected with other social movements and political parties.

Women's Organisations

Several social movements and political parties have special parallel organisations for women. There are also a number of independent women's organisations. The Fredrika Bremer Association was founded in 1884 with the aim of improving the position of women in the home, in society and in politics. As part of the struggle for universal suffrage, women's suffrage associations were set up at the turn of the century. In the inter-war years both housewives' unions and organisations for working women were formed. In recent years women have set up more or less permanent campaigning groups: Group 8 which dates from the end of the sixties is one example. In 1984 the country's women's refuges – which campaign for women's liberation and equal rights as well as against violence and the oppression of women – formed their own national union.

Pensioner Organisations

The active work done by the organisations for pensioners has mostly taken place at local level, although they have grown in importance as political pressure groups as pensioners have risen in number.

Sports Associations

Gymnastics, skiing, cycling and the various ball-games formed organisations of their own at the end of the nineteenth century. The Swedish Sports Confederation was founded in 1903. The sporting movement grew strongly during the 1920s and 1930s and is now one of the largest of the social movements.

International Solidarity Groups

The Swedish Red Cross, which was formed in 1865, works together with the International Red Cross to protect and help people in need. Save the Children was founded in 1919 with the aim of improving the living conditions of children and to assist children in need. That same

year the Norden Association was established as the agency for Nordic cooperation on a voluntary basis. Among organisations with an international orientation belong the Swedish UN-association, Amnesty and various kinds of solidarity associations and campaign groups.

The Peace Movement

The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Association (*SFSF*) is the oldest peace organisation in Sweden, formed in 1883. The International Women's Union for Peace and Freedom (*IKFF*) and the Swedish Peace Committee were established somewhat later. Among more recent peace organisations are Women for Peace (*KFF*), the Peace Forum of the Labour Movement and the Working Party for a Swedish National Assembly for Disarmament.

The Environmental Movement

The Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature (*SNF*) was established in 1909 with nature conservation as its chief task. In 1947 *Fältbiologerna* – an association for environmental studies – was formed as the youth organisation of the SNF, nowadays it is an independent organisation. The greater currency of environmental issues has led to the formation of several new organisations. The National Association of Environmental Protection Groups (subsequently the Guardians of the Environment) was formed in 1971, the Friends of the Earth in 1972 and the Environmental Association in 1976. Greenpeace was introduced to Sweden in 1983. A large number of community associations and campaigning groups also form part of the ecological movement. Many of these, such as the Tree-huggers and the River-rescuers, have been formed to safeguard natural environments from exploitation.

The Membership of the Voluntary Organisations

According to their own records Swedish voluntary organisations have a combined total of 30 million members distributed among some 150,000

local branches. The largest organisations, in terms of their number of members, are the trade union movement, the sporting movement, the consumer cooperative movement and the housing organisations.

Only a small minority, less than ten per cent, of the adult population, remain outside associational life. An even smaller minority of eight per cent are members of seven or more different kinds of organisation. There is therefore a considerable degree of variation around the average of three memberships per adult Swede but the great majority of Swedes are members of between one and four associations.

Interview surveys also reveal that there is often a considerable gap between membership and active involvement. A third of the population have been elected to some form of official position in an association; if only in this regard two thirds of the population remain uncommitted to an active associational life. Those who are really committed, who hold three or four elected posts, constitute a tiny minority of four per cent. The firebrands of associational life are fairly few in number.

It may be objected that the figures cited above only relate to external activity. The question remains what role if any the central organisations play in the conceptual universe of the average citizen. It is part of the ethos of the social movements that the voluntary associations are driven by high ideals, that they represent idealistic strivings and goals. In this respect interview surveys reveal that there is often a wide gulf between the ideal and reality. Most citizens nowadays identify only weakly with several of the traditional Swedish social movements such as the Free church, temperance and cooperative movements. More recent movements such as the peace and environmental movements are, however, more firmly identified with by today's Swedes.

The Labour Market

Given the major importance that the labour market organisations have for the economic life of the country, it is hardly surprising that the area in which state regulation of organisational activity has been most thoroughly implemented is that covered by the confederations of the trade unions and employers. As the power of the trade unions grew so did the demands of their opponents for the state to intervene. In time however

the central organisations of both sides of industry were united in their efforts to establish the rules of the labour market on their own terms and so avoid state intervention. The signing of the Basic Agreement between LO and SAF at Saltsjöbaden in 1938 was to be a milestone in this regard. The state only stipulated the general framework and certain arbitration methods, chiefly through the legislation on arbitration in labour disputes of 1906, the acts on collective bargaining and the Labour Court of 1928 and the law on the rights of association and negotiation of 1936.

This regulatory system was only intended to cover the private labour market, initially only in relation to workers and then subsequently to salaried employees. As the number of employees in central and local government administration gradually expanded and their terms of employment came increasingly to resemble those of most private sector employees, it became clear that public sector employees should be given the right to negotiate. Although consultations between the two sides continued for several decades, it was not until 1965 that a law was passed specifically authorising the right of public sector employees to form collective agreements on their pay settlements. Public sector employees were also given the right to strike.

The legislation on labour law was subject to fundamental reform during the first half of the 1970s. The regulations were to be virtually the same for the whole of the labour market, both in the private and the public sectors. Of particular relevance here are the Co-determination at Work Act (*medbestämmandelagen*, MBL), the Security of Employment Act, the Work Environment Act and the Equal Opportunities Act. The Act on Public Employment contains special provisions affecting positions of employment which are subject to state regulation. These laws are supplemented by the results of collective agreements between both sides of industry.

The industrial democracy legislation, the Co-determination at Work Act, contains several fundamental provisions of direct significance for the labour market organisations. A key principle is the right of association. The general statutes of the Instrument of Government are given more detailed form here, in part through rules on the prohibition of the infringement of the right of association. The legislation lays down that the right of negotiation belongs to the employer, the employer organisations and trade union organisations but not to the individual employee. The act also contains provisions on collective agreements and on

their form and application. Fundamental to Swedish labour law is the distinction between conflicts of law and conflicts of interest. In conflicts of law the parties cannot agree on how the law or a particular agreement should be interpreted. Conflicts of interest are those that concern differences of opinion on matters not yet regulated by act of parliament or by agreement. In principle industrial action, such as strikes, lock-outs or boycotts, is only permitted in relation to conflicts of interest. A truce is mandatory during the negotiating period. There are special provisions for the resolution of conflicts of law; normally they are decided by the Labour Court. A special act of parliament lays down the framework for co-determination at work by employees. This law has been supplemented by special co-determination agreements. The Co-determination at Work Act gives employees the right to information and obliges the employer to negotiate with the trade union representatives of the employees prior to making any major changes. However, if no agreement can be reached, the employer prevails.

In comparison with Continental European conditions, Nordic labour laws deviate in general from the norm and Swedish labour laws do so in particular. While in many other countries it is primarily the individual who is endowed with labour rights, in Sweden these rights are vested in the collective body, the trade union organisation.

The general process of individualisation, a greater degree of individual variation in setting wage levels and new forms of labour organisation have led to the development of newer and more flexible forms of industrial democracy than those foreseen in the legislation of the 1970s. When the non-Socialist government came to power in 1991 several aspects of labour legislation were made the subject of commissions of inquiry, although no major changes have yet been implemented.

The Negotiating System

Collective bargaining is a fundamental feature of the Swedish labour market. Wages are set through agreements reached at nationwide, district and local level. Other aspects of labour relations are also regulated by collective agreements. Both sides of industry have also reached agreements on matters such as equal opportunity measures, the work environment, co-determination, statistics and education and training.

The power relations that govern these agreements have also been

subject to many changes. The Saltsjöbaden Agreement made both LO and SAF the key players in the labour market. Both peak organisations became increasingly powerful. Through a revision of its statutes LO won greater power over its affiliated unions; the rules still give LO the right of veto over strike action by its affiliates. The system of centralised bargaining between LO and SAF reached its zenith during the period that began with the bargaining round of 1956. In practice the wages of Swedes were determined throughout this period by centralised bargaining agreements which set the trend for the whole of the labour market.

The negotiating system became rather more complicated in the middle of the 1960s when state and municipal employees were given the right to negotiate. During the 1970s a new player entered the fray in the form of a cartel of employee unions in the private sector which took its place alongside LO among the negotiating parties. It was in the wages rounds of the 1980s that individual unions were to play a bigger role than they had for many years.

The role of parliament and the Government in the negotiating system has also changed. In the 1930s LO and SAF were united in their desire to exclude the state from any involvement in wage agreements. With the advent of negotiating rights for public sector employees and the greater economic significance of the public sector, the Government gradually became an employer of major importance. Tax policy, wage formation and decisions on social transfer payments developed into increasingly interconnected factors in the making of financial policy. Vacillation has characterised the attitudes of most Swedish governments in relation to this problem. On the one hand the concept of a government incomes policy has a negative sound to it given the traditional systems of negotiation in Sweden. On the other hand the Government has the primary responsibility for the economic policy of the nation and this is very much affected by wages policy. In 1990 the Government tried to launch a wages stabilisation policy which would be acceptable across the whole of the labour market. The Rehnberg Commission, which was composed of individuals who had held leading posts in the labour market organisations, recommended setting fixed wage levels. The first attempt of this kind was a failure. In 1991, however, virtually all sides of industry complied with the Rehnberg agreement. Since the effect of the agreement was limited to two years, the future development of the negotiation system, remains an open question.

Public Funding for the Organisations

The state, the municipalities and the county councils provide substantial subsidies for the operation of the organisations. Central government grants for associational activities amounted to 7.5 billion SEK in the budget year 1989/90. In addition there are municipal subsidies to local organisations in the order of 4.4 billion SEK annually while the county councils contribute 1.3 billion SEK to the organisations at regional level. In the year in question public subsidy to the voluntary associations and interest organisations amounted therefore to just over 13 billion SEK.

The major recipients of state support include humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross and Save the Children, educational associations, sporting associations, voluntary defence organisations, youth organisations, organisations for the disabled and the labour market organisations.

There are three forms of public subsidy for organisations. Standard grants provide general subsidy to a specific association, such as the organisations that exist for pensioners. Result-oriented grants are intended to achieve certain effects; local activity grants are aimed at increasing the involvement of young people in associational life and this is, in turn, expected to have positive social and political effects. Contract compensation awards are grants that are made in payment for the execution of a specific task; the Swedish International Development Authority might, for example, commission a particular association to carry out a particular aid project.

The practice of providing support for associations from public funds has its critics and they include the National Audit Bureau and the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development, which scrutinised the grant systems at the Government's behest. The grant system has major deficiencies in oversight and evaluation procedures. The state has failed to take an overall view of the funding it makes available to the voluntary associations. As many organisations have taken on paid staff, they have become dependent on state support and independent of their members. State funding tends to favour those organisations that are already established.

The Political Role of the Organisations

The extent to which the organisations are able to influence the political decision-making process can be considered from two perspectives, in terms of direct and indirect influence.

Direct influence relates to the participation of the organisations in the decision-making process. It would be in conflict with the principles of pluralism and democracy if organisations were given representation on elected political bodies; corporative representation of this kind is incompatible with the principle of the individual which lies at the heart of the liberal concept of democracy. The organisations are, however, represented on various bodies which draft and execute political decisions.

The constitution explicitly concedes that administrative duties may be entrusted to associations. If the duty in question involves the exercise of public authority, this must be supported by an act of parliament. It is the approved unemployment benefit societies, for example, which decide the level of unemployment benefit. It is the Swedish Writers' Union which awards government grants to writers. Government funding for sports, the Free churches, temperance work and voluntary adult education is allocated through the organisations.

In cases of this kind the state may be making requirements of the organisations which have the effect of turning them into a kind of public authority in certain respects. In order to meet the oversight requirements attendant on the exercise of public authority, the organisations become liable to the application of the publicity principle. Such organisations are also liable to be made the subject of an official investigation by the National Audit Bureau, the Riksdag Auditors or the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

The major organisations have long been represented on the executive bodies of the central public authorities. This system of lay representation in the administration has been justified mainly in terms of a desire to entrench the decisions of the public administration among the interested parties and to allow the representatives of various organisations a say in administrative proceedings. However, this system is currently up for review. In 1991 the Swedish Employers' Confederation decided to withdraw its representatives from public bodies; the system of lay involvement was considered to embody corporatism and as a result to lead to a lack of clarity as to where accountability lies.

Another vital form of direct representation is on the official commissions of inquiry which have preceded many of the most important political decisions. Representatives of the interest organisations have often served as members of commissions of this kind and are accorded an equal status with politicians, civil servants and other experts. A good many major reforms have actually been decided within the deliberative framework of the official commissions of inquiry. The role played by the system of commissions of inquiry has, however, been diminishing since the beginning of the 1980s.

The trend in relation to direct influence is therefore fairly clear: the major interest organisations no longer enjoy the same degree of access to the political decision-making process.

Indirect paths of influence include two main variants. One form of access to decision-making is via the political parties, the other is via the lobbying activities of the various interest organisations.

It is in terms of their particular origins that a number of the political parties are intimately linked to the sphere of associational activity. The political and trade union wings of the labour movement were previously linked by organisational ties. There are still powerful personal alliances between the trade union movement and the Social Democratic Party. A considerable proportion of Social Democrats elected to office on municipal councils, for example, are either trade union shop stewards or trade union activists. There are also close ties between the party and the unions at central level. In 1991 the Social Democrats campaigned on a manifesto which had been jointly adopted by the party executive of the Social Democrats and the national secretariat of LO.

The linkage with the associational world is less strong in relation to the other political parties but links can nevertheless be clearly discerned. The Centre Party has no formal ties with the agricultural associations but both personal connections and other bonds still constitute vital links between them. The roots of the connection between the Liberals and the associations lie in the party's historical relationship with the Free churches. The Christian Democrats have strong personal ties to the Pentecostalist churches. Both the Moderates and the Liberals have close ties to the organisations representing trade and industry.

Although the ties between the parties and the organisations are still powerful today, it is possible to see signs that they are, in fact, becoming weaker. Despite enormous internal conflicts the Social Democrats strove throughout the 1980s to underline their independence from the trade

union movement. The agricultural organisations are seeking to establish ties beyond the Centre Party. The Liberals are attempting to define themselves as a party of ideas and not as a party of special interests. The Moderates stopped accepting donations from industry during the 1960s.

As a result the organisations are increasingly having to seek to influence the political process by other means. The growing importance of opinion formation was mentioned in the preceding chapter. As in many other countries, lobbying, pressure groups and campaigning on behalf of special interests are becoming increasingly important paths to influence.

Decorporatisation

What is meant here by corporatism is a special triangular relationship that exists between the state and the interest organisations. A typical example would involve the state, the employers and the trade union movement reaching agreement on incomes policy. However, the Swedish Model for wage formation used to involve the opposite of that kind of corporatism; the distinguishing feature of the Swedish Model was the exclusion of the state from the bargaining rounds. Nor can the current trend in the negotiating system be said to be moving in a more corporatist direction. The stated intention of the Employers' Confederation is to avoid centralised incomes policy agreements of this kind.

The main trend at present is clear: corporatism is being broken up while pluralism is being promoted. The consequences of this development will be particularly significant for Sweden. The traditional Social Democrat welfare policy with its corporatist structures is being challenged. The smaller states of Europe are also adapting to an international pattern in which separate minorities continue to attempt to assert their interests through pressure groups while being prepared neither to take on the mantle of political responsibility nor to carry out administrative duties.

The Organisations and Democracy

The dilemma of pluralist democracy is that it both needs and is threatened by the existence of powerful organised interest groups. It is this

dual aspect of the organised special interests that has attracted particular attention in the course of the debate on democracy in Sweden.

For many years the organisations in general and the social movements in particular were valued as the cornerstones of Swedish democracy. The great influence of the organised interest groups and their frequently direct involvement in the political decision-making process was seen by both domestic and foreign observers as the special emblem of Swedish democracy.

However, this valuation was rapidly reversed at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The interest organisations were now the great menace facing democracy. The special interest groups threatened to outflank the public interest. Their function as machines continuously churning out new demands was exhausting the capacities of responsible politicians. Although the whole system of interest organisations was in the firing line, it was the trade union movement, LO in particular, and the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF), as the representative of the agricultural lobby, that were being targeted. The most powerful attacks against the trade union movement came from the non-Socialist parties, although there was criticism of LO's political influence inside the Social Democratic Party as well.

Several factors explain this reversal in the way the interest organisations were seen; the change in economic conditions is one of the most significant. The events of the early 1990s helped to clarify the scale of the economic problems Sweden faced. Cuts in public expenditure and wages policy restraint put the leadership of the LO in a difficult position caught between the short-term demands of the members and the long-term financial situation of the nation.

It is clear that the position of the organised interest groups within the Swedish power system is going through considerable changes. Their relationship to the state is being altered through decorporatisation and the drawing of clearer distinctions between the roles of the special interest groups and the public authorities. Relations to the political parties do not run as smoothly as they used to. The transformation of the negotiating system is diminishing the relative importance of the central organisations while inside the trade union movement it is the individual unions which are gaining greater power.

13 The Mass Media

The Daily Press

Sweden's oldest newspaper, *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, was started in 1645 as an instrument of state power. In those days there was no question of a free exchange of information.

The Age of Liberty increased the range of opportunities for the formation of public opinion. During the eighteenth century a growing number of news-sheets and pamphlets were published. The Swedish Freedom of the Press Act of 1776 was the first of its kind in the world. Censorship was abolished, except in relation to theological works. The principle of public access to official documents was enshrined in law.

During the Gustavian Autocracy 1772–1809 new restrictions were imposed on the freedom of expression. The printers of books were made responsible for the contents of the writings they printed; the effect of this was to make them more cautious about what they published. However, these restrictions could not obstruct the torrent of political writing flowing at that time. With the Freedom of the Press Act of 1810 many restrictions were lifted, although severe punishments could still be meted out to any one bringing the church or the monarchy into disrepute. The authorities could prevent the publication of newspapers they took objection to by suspending the authorisation to publish.

Under its editor Lars Johan Hierta the liberal newspaper *Aftonbladet*, which was founded in 1830, took up the cudgels for greater freedom of expression. Hierta's repeated defiance of the power of suspension finally achieved results. By the beginning of the 1840s freedom of the press had virtually triumphed.

Liberal philosophical currents, increased demand for news and entertainment, improved printing techniques and better communications made possible the printing of larger editions. The first modern morning paper, *Dagens Nyheter*, was started in 1864. New typography, classified advertisements, subscriptions and home delivery were a few of the novelties of the period which were to have a lasting impact.

The newspapers which were founded during the following decades were either liberal or conservative in orientation. Towards the end of the century the nascent labour movement announced its arrival not only through the trade unions and the formation of political parties but also through the setting up of newspapers. The advent of these newspapers meant Sweden had gained a party press, ie the existence of close links between a newspaper and a political party.

During the first decades of the twentieth century the daily press expanded on a massive scale, particularly at local level. Even quite small localities might have several competing newspapers. The number of newspapers was at its greatest during the 1920s. As in many other countries this was followed by a period of newspaper closures. It was usually the smaller newspapers that were forced to close in the circulation wars. It was the larger newspapers that had the upper hand mainly because advertisers preferred to advertise in the paper with the largest local circulation.

State subsidies for the press which were introduced towards the end of the 1960s were able to postpone but not reverse the effects of this trend. In recent decades only very few attempts to establish new daily newspapers have met with any success.

The current structure of the Swedish press displays the following characteristics. Economic factors mean that it is hardly possible any longer to set up newspapers. The concentration of ownership means that the twelve major newspaper companies own almost half of the total number of daily newspapers and control three quarters of the total number of copies printed daily. The party press still exists but has been enfeebled, because of the crisis affecting the Social Democratic newspapers in particular. Most liberal and conservative newspapers are predominantly in private hands, largely owned by the Bonnier family and regionally-based private interests. In the majority of areas of publication a local newspaper monopoly is more usual than a competitive situation.

The link between newspapers and political parties is not solely to do with ownership. Most daily papers announce the political orientation of

their editorial policy in terms of their affiliation to a particular party. In 1989 only 8 per cent of all newspapers published declared themselves to be apolitical. Non-Socialist newspapers accounted for 73 per cent of the total circulation while the Social Democrats could count on only 19 per cent. The Social Democratic press is read almost exclusively by the party's own voters. Conversely the liberal newspapers reach a great many more readers than there are Liberal voters. In those localities where a choice exists between various newspapers, there is still a relatively strong link between the party sympathy of the readers and their choice of newspaper. However, in the newsroom newspapers have come to be edited more on a journalistic basis and less on party political lines. Party political differences are nowadays manifested almost exclusively in the leader columns.

Radio

Technology made wireless telegraphic transmission possible at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Riksdag then passed a law requiring that transmissions of this kind must be licensed by the state. When radio broadcasting eventually got underway in the 1920s there was no need for any new legislation. In 1924 the state awarded the license for radio broadcasts to a particular company. The regulations were laid down both in the Radio Act and in the agreement between the broadcaster and the state. These regulations were to establish the parameters for the public service model which would characterise the broadcast media in Sweden. The state sets out the basic framework for operations, which are financed by license fees, while responsibility for the detailed nature of program contents rests with independent program companies. All programs are to be impartial and objective.

For many years radio programs were dominated by entertainment and popular education. News broadcasts were run by TT, the Swedish news agency, which was owned by the press. Not until the mid-1950s did radio develop a more autonomous journalistic ethos devoted to an independent scrutiny of public affairs.

For the first three decades of the history of radio there was only one channel. A second channel was set up in 1955 and a third in 1964. At the end of the 1970s a start was made on setting up a network of local radio broadcasters to serve individual counties. At the same time radio

and television broadcasting and production operations were brought together in a single organisation consisting of a holding company, the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (*Sveriges Radio*) and four program companies.

In 1992 the Riksdag decided to break up the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and set up three companies in its place. Swedish Radio is the current name for the company set up after the amalgamation of national and local radio services. What was previously known as local radio now forms the P4 channel of Swedish Radio.

From the 1960s the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation was owned by the social movements (60 per cent), industry (20 per cent) and the press (20 per cent). The ownership structure of the license-funded radio and television network has been the subject of much discussion. As of 1994 Swedish Radio, Swedish Television and Swedish Educational Radio are owned instead by independent foundations run by boards of members appointed on a party political basis. The three boards are appointed by the Government on the advice of the Riksdag. Members of the Riksdag, but not Government ministers, may sit on these boards. However, the boards of management of the program companies themselves are not politically appointed but recruited instead on the basis of their professional competence.

The Swedish media landscape was radically reshaped by the advent of new, independent radio stations. By the end of the 1970s non-profit making organisations were allowed to transmit radio programs locally; their transmitters have a relatively short range, usually about five kilometres. This form of local or neighbourhood radio has mainly been exploited by religious and political organisations. In a number of cases locally-based political parties have been able to get their message across using neighbourhood radio broadcasts of this kind; one example being the Scania party in Malmö in 1985.

The issue of advertising on radio has proved controversial in party political terms. The non-Socialist majority in the Riksdag introduced advertising to local radio in 1993 together with a new form of commercially-financed local radio service. The objective is to allow the establishment of independent, locally-based, privately-owned radio companies. This has brought a new dimension to local radio. Advertising on the new private local radio stations is limited to a maximum of eight minutes per hour. There is, however, to be no limit on political commercials. Where there are several companies competing for a broadcasting

license for a local radio station, the license is auctioned off to the highest bidder. Certain potential proprietors are prohibited from owning local radio stations: the state, the county councils, the municipalities, companies forming part of Swedish Radio, TV 4 and the daily newspapers. In fact the majority of the new commercial radio stations are owned by already established mass media companies.

Television

The televisual medium became the focus of political conflict as soon as it was introduced to Sweden in the 1950s. Private industry wanted commercial television, while an alliance of the Association of Swedish Newspaper Publishers, the Social Democrats and the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation opposed advertising on television. It was the anti-commercial coalition that triumphed. Television was put on the same footing as radio, namely as a licence-funded monopoly, required to meet standards of objectivity and impartiality.

A second public service channel was introduced in 1969. TV 2 was gradually extended across the country and both channels were given equivalent responsibilities. A spirit of "stimulating competition" was to prevail between the channels. Both were to have news services of their own. Regional operations were to be expanded, including a requirement that a quarter of the total national production of programs should be produced outside Stockholm. At the end of the 1970s regional news broadcasts were introduced across the country. Each channel was given a more distinct identity by decision of the Riksdag in 1986. Channel 1 was to be based on the production resources located in Stockholm while the Sweden Channel, TV 2, was to be more regionally-based.

In the mid-1980s technological change radically altered the structure of television broadcasting in Sweden. Satellite broadcasts and cable networks were now making it possible for Swedish homes to receive foreign television channels, including commercial television programs. It has been estimated that by the beginning of the 1990s two thirds of Swedish homes were able to receive satellite television. Three satellite channels were targeted on the Swedish market in particular: TV 3, TV 4 and Nordic TV (later renamed *Femman*, ie Channel Five). In the space of a few years the number of Swedish television channels had risen from two to five.

Technological change and market forces brought a new dimension to

the politically controversial issue of Swedish commercial television. In recognition of these changes the Riksdag decided to license a commercially-financed television channel on the terrestrial transmission network. After a complicated power struggle the license was awarded to TV 4 and a group of owners dominated by the financier Jan Stenbeck, who also controls TV 3.

The Power Structure of the Media

The existence of a large number of independent power centres is fundamental to the concept of the pluralist society and is of crucial importance to the institutions that form public opinion. The declaration of the Instrument of Government that popular government is based on the free formation of opinion reflects a view that is generally accepted in democratic debate. The Swedish mass media system displays considerable shortcomings in this regard.

The local newspaper monopoly and the shortage of newly established newspapers have cemented a press structure which fails to promote a debate at local level in which many different voices can be heard. At the national level the growing dominance of the Bonnier family has meant that there is a considerable concentration of power in the world of the Swedish mass media.

Until very recently the monopoly situation meant that the state was the dominant influence on radio and television. The greater availability of international television channels has brought with it increased competition for Swedish Television. The licensing of the TV 4 channel on the terrestrial network meant breaking with the fundamental principles of the previous order. Nevertheless, the two public service channels have retained their dominant position in terms of their audience share. The effect is that a concentration of power to the state has been replaced by a more mixed ownership structure. It is, however, clear that there are limits to the spirit of pluralism as the new television companies are owned by entrepreneurs with interests in other industrial sectors. The concentration of power to the state has, rather, been supplemented by a concentration of power to private hands.

The lack of pluralism in the Swedish media world is also evident in the recruitment and composition of the press corps. It is true that there are a considerable number of journalists, particularly among the older

members of the profession, who did not start their careers on the foundation of a university journalism course. However, the schools of journalism in Stockholm and Gothenburg have been an important factor in creating a uniform professional identity. The dominance of Stockholm over the national media, the relatively limited number of individuals involved and the informal networks that link them together have all served to accentuate the tendency to uniformity within the Swedish mass media.

The Media and the Public

The average Swede devotes 5 3/4 hours to the mass media every day. Radio and television together account for two thirds of the total. Listeners account for 45 per cent, viewers for 37 per cent and readers for 18 per cent of the hours involved. However, the pattern of consumption of the mass media varies between social groups. Even though the vast majority of households subscribe to morning newspapers, the frequency is highest among those with most education. This pattern is reversed in terms of the consumption of television and evening papers; here consumption is highest among the less educated.

There are also major social differences in relation to the participation by individual Swedes in the field of the mass media. Access to media resources is a vital route to influence. While the majority of graduates have written an occasional newspaper article or a letter to the editor, only an eighth of workers have interacted with the mass media in this way. The proportion of the public who have attempted to influence a social problem via the media is more than twice as high among white-collar employees as among blue-collar workers. It would be inaccurate to describe the mass media as providing a voice for the silent and the neglected.

The picture the media provides of society reflects the particular composition of the group of decision-makers working in the media. Men are seen more frequently than women. The middle-aged predominate over the young and the elderly. High-ranking officials, academics and public employees are heard and seen more than other occupational groups. While the mass media reflect a particular reality they also contribute through their normative role to the preservation of the current power structure.

Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Press

The Instrument of Government

The opening paragraph of the Instrument of Government states that “Swedish democracy is founded on freedom of opinion”.

In the list of fundamental freedoms the Instrument of Government declares that every citizen is guaranteed freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of assembly, freedom to demonstrate, freedom of association and freedom of worship in their relations with the public administration. Freedom of expression is understood as “the freedom to communicate information and to express ideas, opinions and emotions, whether in speech, in writing, in pictorial representations, or in any other way.”

The rights and freedoms have also been formulated in such a way as to safeguard the integrity of the individual. All citizens are protected in their relations with the public administration “against all coercion to divulge an opinion in any political, religious, cultural or other similar connection”. This protection also extends against coercion to take part in meetings or demonstrations or to belong, for example, to any political or religious association (the negative right of association).

The Instrument of Government lays down how the freedom to form opinion may be restricted; at issue here are the forms of restriction imposed on the freedom to impose restrictions. Firstly, what is required is a qualified procedure involving two decisions by the Riksdag separated by a twelve-month interval; a single decision is sufficient if five-sixths of the members of the Riksdag agree. Secondly, various requirements have to be met for any restriction on the various freedoms of opinion to be imposed. Freedom of expression and freedom of information may only be restricted with regard to the security of the realm, the national supply, public safety and order, the integrity of the individual, the sanctity of private life, or the prevention of crime. The Instrument of Government also concedes that restrictions may be imposed on the freedom of expression in economic activities; this makes it possible to pass legislation to regulate commercial advertising, for example. Finally it is stated, in a rather sweeping formulation, that restrictions on the

freedoms of expression and information may be made “where particularly important reasons so warrant”.

The Freedom of the Press Act

The Freedom of the Press Act is a fundamental law of the realm with constitutional status. It concerns “printed material”, which refers primarily to books, newspapers, periodicals and to material produced by a printing press. The law also applies to written material duplicated by stencil, photocopier or similar process, on condition that the material contains details of the identity of the publisher.

The Freedom of the Press Act contains the following main principles. Freedom of the press and the related prohibition of censorship are defined as “the right of every Swedish subject, without prior hindrance by a central administrative authority or other public body, to publish any written matter”. Freedom of the press also covers the right of every citizen to express thoughts and opinions, to publish official documents and communicate information “on any subject whatsoever”. The freedom to communicate information refers to the right of every citizen, including public officials, to provide information to the mass media without fear of reprisal. Fundamental to the Swedish principle of publicity is the notion that every Swedish subject should have free access to official documents. Both authors and those persons communicating information also enjoy the right to anonymity. The greater part of the Freedom of the Press Act is devoted to defining more closely these general principles and to describing what exceptions apply.

What cannot be said in Sweden? The Freedom of the Press Act lists fifteen different kinds of action that are punishable under law: high treason, instigation of war, espionage, unauthorised traffic in secret information, any act of negligence in handling secret information, insurrection, treason, negligence injurious to the interests of the country, dissemination of rumours endangering the security of the realm, incitement to criminal acts, persecution of a population group, criminal acts of child pornography, unlawful depictions of violence, libel and affront. The offences referred to in the first half of this list are of little practical significance in peacetime, but may become current in wartime and during periods of civil unrest. Offences against the freedom of the press include offences against the exceptions contained in the Official

Secrets Act concerning the freedom of communication for public officials.

Special rules apply for legal proceedings brought under the Freedom of the Press Act. This procedure is a consequence of the prohibition of censorship. Since no publication may be subject to scrutiny before printing, liability for offences against the freedom of the press must be determined after the event. The Freedom of the Press Act lays down who is to be held liable for an offence and how liability is to be determined. The rules determining liability differ between periodical and non-periodical printed matter. Periodicals are defined as publications issued at least four times a year. Periodicals must have a responsible publisher, appointed by the proprietor, and must be registered with a particular public authority.

The publisher of a periodical is liable in the first instance. If for any reason there is no responsible publisher, the owner is liable. If the owner is unknown, the printer of the periodical is liable. If the identity of the printer is unknown, the liability lies with the disseminator.

A corresponding chain of responsibility also exists for non-periodical printed matter. The author is liable in the first instance. If the author is anonymous or his identity unknown for any other reason, liability falls on the responsible publisher, thirdly on the person who has undertaken to print and publish the writings, fourthly on the printer of the material and finally on the disseminator.

It is the duty of the Attorney General to ensure that the limits of the freedom of the press are not transgressed. The Attorney General alone may act as prosecutor in freedom of the press cases.

Cases concerning offences against the freedom of the press are heard in the first instance by district courts. The unique feature of freedom of the press cases is that they are heard, if the parties so wish, by a jury. Jury members are appointed for each county and are divided into two groups, the first of sixteen jurors and the second of eight jurors. The jury members of the second group must currently be or have previously been lay members of a court of law (see chapter 9). Both parties in the case have the right to exclude three jurors in the first group and one in the second. The court then selects a jury of nine members by lot (three of whom must be from the second group).

Freedom of the press cases are affected by three special provisions which make a conviction more difficult. Firstly, based on a general instruction contained in the Freedom of the Press Act, the court should

“in case of doubt acquit rather than convict.” Secondly a rule is applied that requires a qualified majority of six of the nine jurors for a conviction. Thirdly the jury acting on its own may acquit the defendant. The court may not convict the defendant if the jury has voted for acquittal. However, the court may always impose a more lenient sanction or acquit the defendant despite a conviction by the jury. Cases brought under the Freedom of the Press Act are comparatively rare; only some ten cases annually result in a verdict. Just over half of these usually result in acquittal.

The Freedom of Expression Act

In 1991 after several commissions of inquiry and a public debate that had lasted several years, the Riksdag adopted a new fundamental law to cover those forms of expression not dealt with by the Freedom of the Press Act. It covers freedom of expression in radio, television and certain other electronic media, satellite broadcasts, films, videos and sound recordings.

The basic structure of the Freedom of Expression Act is the same as that of the Freedom of the Press Act. In consequence the principles prohibiting censorship and allowing freedom of publication are applicable to the entire field of the mass media, except in two respects. The effect of physical limitations on the number of radio and television frequencies available means that the full scope of the freedom of publication does not apply. The prohibition of censorship does not apply to films. The Act makes mandatory the prior scrutiny of films which are to be shown in public.

Just as there are rules in relation to printed matter which determine who is to be held accountable, corresponding provisions exist to determine responsibility for radio programs, films, sound recordings etc. Offences against the freedom of expression are identical with the fifteen types of offence listed under the Freedom of the Press Act. The rules for legal proceedings in freedom of the press cases serve as the prototype for proceedings in cases heard under the Freedom of Expression Act.

The Official Secrets Act

The general principle of public access to official documents makes provision for a considerable number of exceptions. Large sections of government records are to be kept secret. Documents relating to foreign policy, defence, commercial relations and the sanctity of private life – in connection, for example, with health, medical services and social services – are normally confidential.

The Freedom of the Press Act lays down that the right of public access can only be restricted in seven precisely defined cases, namely in relation to the security of the realm, the central economic policy of the realm, the inspection, control or other supervisory activities of a public authority, the prevention of crime, the public economic interest, the protection of the personal integrity or economic conditions of individuals and the preservation of animal or plant species. The Freedom of the Press Act also defines the concept of “official document”.

The Official Secrets Act contains more detailed provisions on the publicity principle and what exceptions apply to it. The provisions on publicity and official secrecy are constructed as a system of rules, of exceptions to the rules, of exceptions to the exceptions, etc.

The main principle behind the working of the Act is that of public access. The exceptions to this principle constitute the area in which official secrecy applies. Civil servants are affected by the provisions of the Act inasmuch as they are bound by an obligation to maintain secrecy. There are exceptions to official secrecy; on the basis of the right to freedom of communication a public official may disregard the obligation to maintain secrecy and provide information to the mass media. There are, however, restrictions that apply to this right in the form of exceptions to the freedom of communication. There are three forms of exception: grave offences against the security of the realm, the deliberate publication of a secret document and the deliberate disregard of strict duties.

The publicity principle and the Official Secrets Act apply to public authorities and to public officials; the rules also apply to certain companies, independent foundations and organisations entrusted with public responsibilities.

It has long been debated whether or not the publicity principle and the freedom of communication should be extended to cover all private companies and organisations. The argument being that private centres

of power may be just as significant for the individual citizen as public agencies. The counter-argument is made in terms of the principle that companies and organisations are entitled to regulate their own internal affairs. The desire of industry to protect commercial secrets has also worked against any extension of the publicity principle and the freedom of communication. There is now special legislation in effect in relation to company secrets.

Part of the debate on membership of the European Union has revolved around anxieties that membership would involve a dilution of the publicity principle. The freedom of communication enjoyed by public servants is considered to be an essential guarantee for a free and open exchange of opinions and for the critical scrutiny of public bureaucracy.

14 The Business World

In Sweden groups of owners, banks and companies are woven together into a complex network. Owners may be individual families or institutional investors, the banks may be run by powerful owners or by their directors while power over the companies may lie with the owners, the banks or the management. Individual owners have acquired a key role in this intricately interwoven power structure as they are able to function in all three spheres simultaneously. Only they are able to sit on managing bodies, to serve as negotiators and to function as owners of capital.

The groups of owners have their origins in those individuals and families who first set up new companies or commercial organisations. The banking groups have their roots in the entrepreneurial world of the nineteenth century although they developed the structure that has been typical of them throughout most of the twentieth century as a result of a wave of bank amalgamations in the 1910s and of the commercial crises of the 1920s and 1930s. Svenska Handelsbanken and Skandinaviska Banken were controlled by a large number of groups of owners and companies, while Stockholms Enskilda Bank was the focus for the entrepreneurial activities of the Wallenberg family. Most companies evolved out of the powerful technical and commercial organisations which arose within major industry in Sweden.

These three forms of power groupings – a dozen centres of economic power in total – overlap, and are to some extent interwoven with, one another. Most groups of owners hold shares in more than one industrial company and are normally closely linked with one of the banking spheres. The banking groups are made up an outer and an inner sphere.

The inner sphere is linked to the bank by ties of ownership while the outer sphere is made up of companies which are independent in financial terms and of owners who consider it advantageous to maintain permanent links with a bank and with the other protagonists in banking circles. The outer and inner spheres are meshed together by a network of mutual board representation and close commercial and business ties. Industrial groups are characterised both by the considerable degree of autonomy displayed by power-conscious industrial leaders who in many cases represent whole dynasties of industrialists and by ties of long-standing to a particular bank or banking group.

The role of the owners in this extensive network of formal power relations and informal personal contacts is difficult to define with any exactitude. It should be born in mind that close links to other economic actors may be a constraint but they also serve as a resource. Even with limited capital an owner can make use of good contacts with bankers and industrial leaders to exert considerable influence over a large number of companies at one and the same time. The ability of the proprietors to find successful company managers has been one of the most important factors in this regard.

It is difficult to resolve the question of how significant these circumstances are for the political power of the major industrialists, particularly since it is the latent political consequences that are at issue here. The groups of owners, bankers and companies which arose during the period of industrialisation have been strikingly homogeneous while also being oriented toward mutual cooperation. It is characteristic of these groups that they are linked together by many different ties and have been able to smooth over any mutual conflicts of interest. Until now new players in the economic arena have generally been able to operate in at least one of the three typical groupings. This has meant that there has been very little access for the political sphere which has found itself faced with a compact bloc of interconnected interests and power positions. A nationalised commercial banking system would find it extremely difficult to recruit staff with industrial and ownership contacts to board and executive positions. It would not be possible to transfer the role played by the major banks in the banking sphere to any potential nationalised banking system since the network of personal contacts on which its real power is based would not be part of the bargain.

It is hardly probable that the major owners have been able to exert any major degree of political influence simply by dint of their personal

connections to the political establishment such as this has been constituted since the beginning of the twentieth century. Their indirect political power has been derived both from their own economic power and the economic impotence of the political sphere. The major owners have proved successful at preserving and developing their skills and their contacts in the sphere of major companies at the same time as it has been practically impossible for politicians with economic-political ambitions to develop similar contacts and skills. The owners have proved able to exert the power required to preserve the established power relations.

A cornerstone of the social structure of the the Swedish Model is the historic compromise between labour and capital. The success of the major industrial companies has been of decisive importance in securing a welfare state. The demand of the major owners for a “free zone” around the question of ownership has been largely successful as is shown both by the relative failure of demands for intervention against the power of the owners and by the fact that demands of this kind are hardly ever articulated by established politicians. The need for politicians to maintain a dialogue with the major company sphere has been greater than the need of the owners to hold discussions with politicians. Broadly speaking the owners have been able to set the terms of any dialogue with the politicians. With what is largely inherited capital and a similarly inherited network of contacts a small economic elite has played a dominant role in the country’s economic life and in the social development of modern Sweden.

The Structure of Ownership

Swedish industry has a relatively minor small business sector in comparison with other industrialised countries. Many smaller companies are also sub-contracted suppliers to larger companies. The major exporting industrial companies still play a dominant role in Swedish industry.

Any ranking by size of the largest companies in Sweden must depend on which definition of size is chosen. The companies with the biggest turnover are the industrial exporters such as ABB, Volvo, Electrolux, Tetra Laval, Ericsson and Stora on the one hand, and the retail conglomerates KF and ICA on the other. However, these companies would rank

lower on the list if it were based on the number of employees. The largest employers are often to be found in the public sector. In numerous municipalities it is the municipality itself which is the largest employer. In the county council areas, and this also applies to the cities of Gothenburg and Malmö, the health care sector accounts for a major share of employment. Sweden Post, Telia and Swedish State Railways are also major employers. A third method of ranking the companies is to compare the share value of companies listed on the stock exchange. Pharmaceutical and electronics companies topped the list in the early 1990s, while banks and construction companies had fallen back compared with the previous situation. It may be added that the 25 listed companies with the highest value together accounted for over 80 per cent of the total value of shares listed on the stock exchange which is yet another indication of the dominance of the major companies in Sweden.

Who owns the major companies? It is possible to distinguish four major categories of ownership. Privately-owned large companies, most of which are listed, are the dominant feature of Swedish industry. A second category is made up of public owners, usually the state, but including the county councils and the municipalities. A third group of companies are owned by associations, mainly companies controlled by consumer and producer cooperative associations. A fourth category consists of companies owned by foreign interests; usually these are subsidiaries of foreign companies.

Companies are increasingly owned by corporate bodies. These consist both of large companies that have acquired shares in other companies and of shareholders such as share funds, investment companies and insurance companies. Some of the shares managed by institutions are ultimately owned by private individuals. One survey showed that ownership in 1992 was divided between the institutions with 55 per cent, private individuals with 26 per cent and foreign interests with 19 per cent.

In some countries all shares must have the same voting rights assigned to them. In other countries, including Sweden, differential preferences are permitted at the annual general meeting. The Companies Act permits companies to use a system of A and B shares. The rule applying to new companies is that no share may have a voting strength greater than ten times the voting power of any single share. Established companies may, however, continue to issue shares with the same voting rights as previously which means that in certain companies there are shares with

a voting strength a thousand times greater than the voting strength of other shares. Most large companies in Sweden implement a differential voting system. With a differential voting strength between 1–10 it is possible for an owner to gain a majority with only 9 per cent of the share capital. If the differential voting strength ranges from 1–1,000 then a thousandth part of the share capital is enough to gain a majority. The extent of the proportion of shares with differential voting rights is also a significant factor in this regard.

The Companies Act also contains the provision that no single owner may vote for more than 20 per cent of the votes which are represented at the annual general meeting. The Act concedes that the articles of association may set this rule aside and that in any case major owners can get around the provision by dividing a shareholding among several owners who are apparently separate but are in fact closely linked together.

The powerful position of the Wallenberg family in Swedish industry is based on various control techniques. The total shareholding is divided among various foundations controlled by the family which allows them to circumvent the provision that no shareholder may vote for more than 20 per cent of the shares. Using this method of controlling the ownership of shareholdings the family is able to exert a decisive influence while only holding a minority of the shares. This type of indirect control is often of great importance.

A small number of families such as the Wallenbergs, Söderbergs, Bonniers, Lundbergs, Johnsons and Stenbecks still play a major role as the owners of large Swedish companies. Bankers also constitute an important proprietorial group via investment companies, foundations and funds; several major Swedish companies form part of a sphere centred around Svenska Handelsbanken, for example.

The state also plays a major role as the owner of companies, although the non-Socialist Government of 1991–1994 privatised a score of state-owned companies.

Market Imperfections

The perfect market is an ideal model which never actually occurs in the real world. Greater or smaller market imperfections are part of the real

economic system. In most sectors of Swedish industry competition is restricted in one or more respects.

There are two kinds of private agreements and partnerships between companies: vertical partnership, between producers, suppliers and retailers, and horizontal partnership between producers or suppliers at the same level in the chain of production. In the latter case what is often involved is collusion at various forms of price fixing. In a large number of industrial sectors, particularly in the foodstuffs industries and the building supplies industry certain companies have gained an increasingly dominant position. Public regulation and state subsidy can also be found in many sectors. Public intervention comes in a variety of forms: price regulation, technical norms, customs and other import barriers, subsidies that limit the price sensitivity of the consumers as well as barriers to competition that apply to the operations of the municipal and county councils.

Several factors had a negative impact on competitiveness during the 1980s. On the whole competition within the vast public sector works less well than in the private sector. Public purchasing has often been typified by inadequate competition. Sweden has imposed a considerable number of technical barriers to trade that have made competition from abroad more difficult. Company mergers have led to the creation of a large number of monopolies and oligopolies. Restrictive practices have also had a negative effect on competition.

But there have also been signs of increased competitiveness. Several public services have been put out to tender. Price regulation, controls on establishment and many regulations have been abolished. The financial markets have been deregulated. Internationalisation, particularly the abolition of trade barriers and the adoption of EU regulations, is helping to promote competition. The transformation of the industrial structure in favour of decentralisation, small scale technology, flexible production systems and a greater awareness of the needs of and on the part of consumers are also working in favour of greater competitiveness.

However, the Swedish market system has continued to suffer from major shortcomings in terms of its competitiveness while legislation has proved ineffective. This is the background to the new Competition Act, inspired largely by the regulatory system of the European Union, which came into force in 1993. The main aim of the Act is to prohibit restrictive practices and to tighten the rules governing company mergers.

Industry and the State

The state has four principal means of bringing influence to bear on industry: production, ownership, regulation and industrial policy.

As a provider of services the public sector is also a major producer in Sweden. Public production employs roughly one third of the labour force. The main item of production is social services, such as child care, education, health care and the care of the elderly, which are managed at local government level and are produced to a large extent by a tax-financed monopoly.

The state also plays a role as the owner of commercial companies, although in international terms Sweden has never had a particularly large state-owned industrial sector. Swedish industry has been privately-owned in all significant respects. The involvement of the state in commercial activities has been mainly in relation to the infrastructure of the nation as well as in the form of natural or politically determined monopolies such as the postal service, railways, telecommunications, mining, air traffic, alcohol sales and lotteries. Other parts of the state-owned enterprise have evolved less as a result of ideological views and more because of external circumstances. During the economic structural crisis at the end of the 1970s the state became the owner of a number of industrial companies that had been severely affected by the crisis while at the beginning of the 1990s it was the loss-making parts of the banking system that were drawn into state ownership in similar fashion.

As has already been made clear the state can exert a decisive influence on the activities of companies through regulations; the tax regulations are of considerable importance in this regard. The labour market constitutes a special case in which consideration of the interests of the employed has led to the development of a detailed and extensive regulatory apparatus on the basis of both legislation and agreement. The Competition Act contains an explicit legislative provision that the Act does not apply to the labour market. Other sectors which are strongly affected by state regulation are agriculture and housing.

The state can also shape industrial development by the application of its industrial policy. For example, the state may attempt to promote the setting up of new businesses within certain industrial sectors or geographic areas by means of subsidies and other economic incentives. There were, for example, regional political considerations which lay

behind the support to industry in Northern Sweden. The scale and direction of industrial policy have often been controversial in party political terms. The Social Democrats have striven to promote a more active and specifically targeted industrial policy while the non-Socialist parties have campaigned in the main for the state to limit itself to general measures that favour industry as a whole. In practice, however, the non-Socialist governments at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s have been forced into taking emergency industrial policy measures.

The changes currently taking place mean that the role of the state is being diminished in all four of the respects under consideration. Although the banking crisis has led to a temporary extension of state ownership, the role of the state as entrepreneur is diminishing as a consequence of privatisation. During the 1970s the employee investment funds were a major bone of contention. Today there are no longer any corresponding plans to extend state ownership.

The power of the state over industry as expressed through regulation is also being reduced. The deregulation of industry was already under way in the 1980s but has been further accentuated during the 1990s. The capacity of the state to implement an active and selective industrial policy is being restricted to an increasing degree. Current industrial policy is essentially general in scope.

A number of factors lie behind these changes to the role of the state. One crucial causative element is the general process of internationalisation and European integration in particular. The efforts of the state to promote particular companies or industrial sectors often result in the setting of barriers to trade and limitations on competition. Annexation to the European regulatory system puts severe limitations on the freedom of manoeuvre of the Swedish state in this regard. National political decision-making bodies are losing power as a result. Instead the idea is that changes to the system of regulation will give the individual consumer greater power.

Changes to Swedish industrial policy have a further consequence of vital importance. Regulations, subsidies and other industrial policies have traditionally favoured the major export-oriented companies. Only after the event has it become clear that the structure of Swedish industry has tended to become rigid as a result – to the point where its strength is now located in established mature markets. The setting up of new

companies in new and growing markets has been neglected. Industrial policy is nowadays targeted at small businesses and growth companies.

Labour Law

Economic activities are regulated by a large number of laws and statutory instruments. The regulatory system of labour law was developed in order to strengthen the position of employees.

The Co-determination at Work Act aims to promote the influence of employees over working life. The Act gives employees improved negotiating rights and lays down rules for the conduct of industrial disputes and to ensure peace during arbitration. Compulsory negotiation is supplemented by rights to information. The Act, however, makes no other attribution of direct powers. The right of decision-making is vested firmly in the employer. Nor does the Act give any rights to individual employees but rather to trade union organisations.

The Equal Opportunities Act is intended to promote equal rights at work for both men and women in relation to matters affecting jobs, working conditions and career development. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual harassment in working life. Employers are also obliged to promote equality of opportunity in an active manner. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman has been set up to ensure that the Act is complied with.

The Security of Employment Act exists to regulate both the terms of employment and the circumstances of its termination. Dismissal must be based on objective conditions and may ultimately be tested by the Labour Court. In the event of dismissal, the employer is under an obligation to enter negotiations and has to follow set procedures unless other arrangements have been agreed with the trade unions concerned.

There are other pieces of legislation which set out the rules governing the working environment, safety at work, working hours, holiday entitlement, sickness benefit, study leave, parental leave, Swedish lessons for immigrants and shop stewards.

The Non-Socialist Government was keenly aware of the desire of employers to change labour law to the disadvantage of the trade unions. The set procedures for dismissal were to be relaxed to allow the employer

greater freedom to effect dismissals. However, opposition from the trade unions and the Social Democrats was considerable and only minor changes were implemented.

15 The Monarchy

It was the role of the monarchy that lay at the heart of the constitutional conflicts that took place at the turn of the last century. The wording of the Instrument of Government of 1809, “the King alone has the power to rule the country”, made clear the presumption that executive power was vested in the monarch. Although the monarch was bound by the provisions of the Instrument of Government and obliged to listen to the advice of his ministers, the scope for the personal use of royal power was considerable. The conflict over the powers of the Crown revolved mainly around royal power over the appointment of the Government. While Cabinet ministers had to have the confidence of the monarch, the Government itself was to become increasingly dependent on the will of the Riksdag.

In Sweden the transition from the sovereign rule of the monarch to parliamentary democracy became a drawn-out process which was to be subject to a considerable number of reverses. Great strides towards a parliamentary form of democracy were made with the dissolution of the Union with Norway and the advent of a Liberal government under Karl Staaff in 1905, the ministry of Arvid Lindman in 1906 and the return to power of Staaff in 1911. But Staaff’s resignation after the Courtyard Speech of Gustav V in 1914 proved that personal royal power was still very much a living reality.

The advent of the Liberal-Social Democrat coalition government in autumn 1917 constituted the definitive breakthrough for parliamentary democracy in Sweden. Parliamentary government was to become the rule, although in strictly formal terms the article in the Instrument of

Government concerning the exclusive right of the monarch to rule the country remained in effect until 1971.

Although historians have debated alleged attempts by the King to influence a number of Government decisions during the Second World War, the advent of democracy and parliamentary government meant acceptance on the part of the monarch that the role of the sovereign had been reduced to the performance of ceremonial duties. In formal terms the King retained the right to determine the composition of the Government and Cabinet decisions were taken in the name of His Majesty until the adoption of the new Instrument of Government in 1974. Under the new constitution the Speaker of the Riksdag took over the responsibility of leading the formation of the government while the monarch would no longer preside over meetings of the Cabinet and would lose even a formal rank in relation to the armed forces.

With the adoption of the current Instrument of Government, politicians declared that the actions of the head of state in public should be in keeping with his or her role in representing the nation as a whole. The monarch may therefore not behave in such a way as to indicate dissension or tension between the head of state and the elected representatives of the people.

Constitutional Rules

The Instrument of Government

The constitutional compromise of 1971 reached between the Social Democrats and the non-Socialist parties meant that the monarchy was retained although the constitutional duties of the sovereign – chiefly in relation to the formation of governments – were abolished. In consequence the wording of the current Instrument of Government is fairly brief when dealing with the role of the head of state.

According to the Instrument of Government the Prime Minister must keep the head of state informed about national affairs. When so required the Government may meet in Cabinet to inform the head of state. The Instrument of Government also stipulates that an Advisory Committee on Foreign Affairs must be established to serve as a forum for

consultations between the Government and the Riksdag on foreign affairs. The head of state presides over meetings of the Advisory Committee on Foreign Affairs unless the sovereign is absent in which case the Prime Minister is in the chair.

The Instrument of Government lays down a number of additional provisions in relation to the head of state. Only a Swedish citizen who has reached the age of 18 may be head of state. The head of state may not at the same time be a Cabinet minister or serve as Speaker or as a member of the Riksdag.

The Instrument of Government defines who is to be head of state. The King or Queen who occupies the throne of Sweden in accordance with the Act of Succession is the head of state. The succession to the throne is regulated by a special constitutional statute, the Act of Succession. The Instrument of Government also defines how the office of head of state is to be filled if there is no king or queen who has reached eligible age. If the monarch is prevented from fulfilling his or her duties because of illness, foreign travel or for any other reason then the member of the royal family next in the valid line of succession should take over his or her duties as temporary Regent.

If the royal house dies out, the Riksdag appoints a Regent to perform the duties of the head of state until further notice. The same procedure applies if the monarch dies or abdicates and the heir to the throne has not yet reached the age of 25. If the monarch has not been carrying out his or her duties for a period of six months, it is the Riksdag which decides whether the monarch shall be deemed to have abdicated. It is also the Riksdag that decides who will be appointed Regent. If no other competent person can serve, the Speaker is appointed temporary Regent. According to the preparatory work to the Instrument of Government the aim of these provisions is to allow for a pause for reflection in order to hold discussions on the future of the monarchy and to implement any constitutional amendments that may be necessary.

The monarch enjoys a special legal status as a result of the provisions on the immunity of the sovereign from prosecution. The monarch cannot be prosecuted for his or her actions. Furthermore, according to the penal code offences against the royal person are considered to be especially grave. The members of the royal family pay taxes and have the right to vote. The monarch, however, does not make use of the right to vote and may not be elected to the Riksdag.

The Act of Succession

The current Act of Succession which regulates the succession to the Swedish throne after the reign of Karl XIV Johan dates from 1810. The Act of Succession incorporates the principles of primogeniture, lineal descent and, as of 1980, the principle of a fully cognatic succession – the succession passes to the eldest child of the monarch irrespective of its gender. Since 1973 the reigning monarch has been Carl XVI Gustav who was born in 1946. In 1976 he married Queen Silvia, who was born in 1943. As applied to the current royal family, the provisions of the Act define the following order of succession: Crown Princess Victoria (b. 1977), Prince Carl Philip (b.1979), Princess Madeleine (b. 1982) and Prince Bertil, the King's uncle (b.1912).

The Act of Succession also stipulates the religious faith of the monarch. The monarch must “profess the pure evangelical faith, as adopted and explained in the unaltered Confession of Augsburg and in the Resolution of the Uppsala Meeting of the year 1593”. Any member of the royal family not professing this faith shall be excluded from all rights of succession. The children of the sovereign must be brought up within the realm. They may not marry without the assent of the Government. Princes and princesses of the royal house may not become the ruler of a foreign country without the assent of the monarch and the Riksdag.

There are therefore four ways in which a member of the royal family may lose the right of succession: by abandoning the Lutheran faith, by being brought up abroad, by marrying without the appropriate assent or by becoming ruler of a foreign country without permission.

A King Without Power

The official duties of the monarch include opening the annual assembly of the Riksdag, meeting with the Cabinet a few times a year to be kept informed about affairs of state, presiding on average once every two months over the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, taking part in state visits and receiving foreign ambassadors. The concept embodied in the current Instrument of Government has become reality: the monarch no longer has any executive duties, the responsibilities of the Crown are purely ceremonial. It is in theory possible for the monarch to bring influence to bear in an informal way by the expression of a personal

viewpoint during meetings with the Cabinet and at the meetings of the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs. This has, however, to remain an open question owing to the provisions governing official secrecy which mean that no documentary evidence is available. Hitherto there has been nothing to suggest that the political decision-making process has been affected by attempts to exert influence on the part of the sovereign.

The duties vested in the monarch by the Instrument of Government make up only a tiny fraction of the monarch's official engagements. Annually the monarch has some 500 official duties to perform. These include official travel both at home and abroad, official engagements both outside the royal residences as well as ceremonies held within the palaces. In addition the monarch is the patron for life of some 200 academies and associations of various kinds.

The Debate on the Monarchy

At an early stage liberal and radical forces demanded the setting up of a republic in one form or another. The labour movement was also republican in outlook and a commitment to the founding of a republic was written into the party manifesto of the Social Democrats. However, shortly afterwards a difference of opinion on this issue developed within Social Democracy. On one side was a minority who wanted to turn this commitment into reality with immediate effect. In contrast the view of the party leadership was that for tactical reasons the commitment to a republic had to be postponed until the indefinite future so as not to impede the implementation of more urgent political commitments. It was to be the latter view that carried the day. Public opinion does not support the abolition of the monarchy and the introduction of a republic. Once the constitution had formally reduced the powers of the monarch to purely ceremonial functions, the manifesto commitment of the Social Democrats to a republic would also become purely ceremonial.

16 The Church of Sweden

Sweden has been a Christian country for a thousand years and for the first half of that period the church in Sweden formed part of the Roman Catholic church. The territorial division of the Swedish Church into dioceses is an inheritance from the Catholic era. It was the responsibility of the parish to maintain church buildings and administer church property. Both the modern form of church parish (*församling*) and the local authority districts set up in the mid-nineteenth century were based on the boundaries of the medieval division of the country into parochial units (*socken*).

Even during the Catholic era the temporal powers had some influence over the affairs of the Church. The monarch took part in the appointment of bishops, for example. The powers and responsibilities of the bishops, priests and vestry were regulated in the church charters of the provincial laws.

Papal power over the Swedish Church came to an end with the Lutheran Reformation. While the bishops continued to play a prominent role within the diocese, it was primarily the King who gained greater power over the Church as a result of the break with Rome. The efforts of Gustav Vasa to construct a strong nation state were focused on breaking the Church as an independent power. A considerable portion of Church property was transferred to the Crown by a process of confiscation of church lands known as the “Reduction”. Although leading churchmen of the Reformation, such as Olaus Petri and Laurentius Andrae, attempted to assert the independence of the Church from the Crown, the foundations of the established church system had been laid. The national church was to form part of the unitary state.

The power of the state over the church was clearly demonstrated in the Church Law of 1686. Royal absolutism was to apply in the sphere of religion as well. The regulation of the affairs of the church was made the responsibility of the state while the sovereign was to be ultimately responsible for the church.

However, the Church had powers of its own which it could exert over the state. The clergy controlled one of the four Estates of the Riksdag. The very existence of an Estate of the Clergy was an inheritance from the Catholic era. Furthermore the bishops were able to retain considerable power. Despite the fact that many other forms of local self-government were suppressed, the parishes were to survive royal absolutism.

During the eighteenth century it was the ideas of the Enlightenment and the revivalist movements which mounted a challenge to the dominant role of the established church. The Instrument of Government of 1809 would embody the concepts of the separation of powers and of freedom of worship – at least in principle. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century it was time for a differentiation in organisational structure to be implemented between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, both at local and national level. The Local Government Ordinances of 1862 separated the new municipal councils from the church parishes. The Church, however, retained responsibility for school teaching. The introduction of the bicameral Riksdag in 1866 meant the abolition of the Estate of Clergy. Instead a General Synod was set up as the representative body for the participation of the church in legislation on ecclesiastical matters.

Three problems remained unsolved. The first of these concerned membership of the Church and how this was to determine the relationship between the Church and the individual. The second had to do with the relation of the established church to the free churches which arose in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The third had to do with the organisational relations of church and state.

The issue of membership in the Church of Sweden is a crucial aspect of the general debate on the established church. For many years every Swede was obliged to be a member of the Church and had no right to leave. The freedom of worship introduced in the Instrument of Government of 1809 meant only that the obligation to take part in the religious rites of the Church of Sweden was abolished. As yet there was no right to profess another religion. It was not until 1860 that the right to leave the Church of Sweden was officially sanctioned, although only on

condition that the person leaving joined a new congregation which had been approved by the state. An absolute right to leave the Church was not introduced until the Act on the Freedom of Worship was passed in 1951.

Initially the establishment of the church meant that there was a monopoly of religious practice. The Swedish people professed the Evangelical Lutheran faith and no other confession was acceptable. The Conventicle Decree of 1726, which was aimed at the religious revivalist movements, prohibited private gatherings and acts of worship. Under the influence of Enlightenment ideas an Edict of Tolerance was promulgated in 1781 but applied only to foreign citizens. The following year Jews were given the right to practice their religion. In 1860 members of the Protestant free churches were given the right to leave the church but many of them decided to stay. Although freedom of worship was gradually made more extensive, the Swedish Church continued to enjoy a financially privileged status. Financial support to the free church congregations was increased at the beginning of the 1980s.

The Established Church and Freedom of Worship

According to the Instrument of Government every citizen is guaranteed freedom of worship in both the positive and negative senses. Positive freedom of worship means the freedom to practice the religion of choice while negative freedom of worship involves the protection of the individual from any compulsion to reveal his or her religious views, or to practise religion or to belong to any religious congregation.

The establishment of the Church of Sweden is clearly in conflict with the principle of negative freedom of worship. The Instrument of Government contains, therefore, a special transitional provision which expressly declares that the provisions concerning membership of the Church of Sweden apply notwithstanding the statutory guarantee of the negative freedom of worship. Further issues of principle regarding the affairs of the Church of Sweden are also regulated in transitional provisions to the Instrument of Government. These stipulate that regulations of a fundamental nature affecting the Church of Sweden must be set out in law. The Riksdag therefore has wide-ranging formal powers to deter-

mine the affairs of the Church. But the transitional provisions also clearly state that the Riksdag can delegate its power to determine church doctrine and other aspects of the internal affairs of the church to the General Synod.

The regulation of the relation between Church and State has not been changed to any fundamental extent since the mid-nineteenth century. A number of organisational modifications have been implemented but the system of the established church remains in place nevertheless.

The Organisation of the Church of Sweden

Like the public administration, the Church is organised on three levels: national, regional (thirteen dioceses) and local (some 2,500 parishes).

There are, in addition, three different elements which determine the structure of the established church. The functions of the priestly office constitute an important regulatory principle for the Church considered as a religious congregation. Ordination gives priests the right to preach and to administer the sacraments of the Church. There has, however, been a significant lay element in the management of the affairs of the Church of Sweden since ancient times. This lay element is at its most pronounced in the form of local self-government which administers the parishes. The members of the parish elect their own representatives to the vestry. Turnout at these elections which are held every third year is, however, usually low. A third significant element in the organisation of the Church is that some of the agencies of the church have the same status as public authorities and are therefore treated as equivalent to other authorities within the public administration.

The General Synod is the "parliament" of the Church of Sweden and meets once a year. The Synod is composed on party political lines and elected indirectly by representatives of all the parishes in the country. The Riksdag has delegated to the Synod the power to determine the internal affairs of the church. The Central Board of the Church is the "government" of the Church of Sweden.

Disestablishing the Church of Sweden would mean that the status of the church bodies as public authorities would come to an end. The affairs of the Church would nevertheless continue to be determined by

the operation of two distinct organisational principles, the priestly function and lay involvement. It is this combination of priestly office and popular representation which is referred to within the Swedish tradition as "dual responsibility".

There are a variety of views about the future relationship between the state and the Church of Sweden. A whole range of different commissions of inquiry have presented various models for change. Several controversial issues remain to be solved. Should there be an organisational link between the Church and the state in future? Should the Church retain its powers to levy taxation? Who is entitled to a share in the property of the Church? Should the state provide financial support for the up-keep of church buildings? And last but not last: what conditions should apply to membership? Should one automatically become a member of the Church at birth as is currently the case, or should baptism be a condition of membership?

17 The Power Structure

According to traditional theories on the distribution of power within a society, control is concentrated within a single power elite. The classical image portrays society as a pyramid. At the apex is the sovereign, whose rule is based on a fusion of economic, political and ideological power. This hierarchical model is based on the presumption that power emanates from the apex of the pyramid. It is the intermediate levels which carry out the orders of the ruler. The vast majority of the population located at the base of the pyramid form a subordinate mass of subjects.

The figure of the pyramid is an extreme stylisation which is often used as a theoretical model and as a potent image for use in campaigning and propaganda. It is, however, not difficult to find real examples which have been very similar to the condition represented by this image. In a mill town all the property might be owned by a single proprietor. The employees had to use the mill's only shop. Rights of organisation and assembly were very limited. Differentiated voting rights gave the owner the dominant influence over the running of the local authority. The inhabitants lacked any real power over their community.

When used as an image of Sweden as a whole, the pyramid model often involves oversimplification. It underestimates the political representation of the free farmers in the Riksdag of the Estates and the prevalence of a certain degree of local self-government. In many instances it also creates an exaggerated impression of uniformity at the apex of the pyramid. The conflicts that took place between the monarchy and the nobility, as well as between various factions of the bourgeoisie, meant at times that it was inaccurate to refer to a single monolithic elite.

And yet the hierarchical model does capture some of the key features of the social power structure of the Sweden of a century ago. After the loss of Finland and the adoption of the new constitution, social and political changes were to occur without any great convulsions, especially in comparison with many other European countries. Sweden never had to free herself from foreign rule. Only slowly did liberal ideas gradually take root. The cities and a modern urban culture developed late. At the turn of the century public life in Sweden was still dominated by the royal family and conservative officialdom. The broad mass of the people lacked any form of political power.

The decades surrounding the end of the last century were characterised by rapid and far-reaching changes in economic, social and political life. Industrialisation and urbanisation were to change the living conditions of major sections of the population. The rural poor either emigrated or sought work in the sawmills, the paper-mills, the mines and the engineering workshops. Railways, newspapers, telephones and the telegraph changed the nature of communications. New ideas were widely disseminated. Large groups of citizens came together in the new social movements, the interest organisations and the political parties. It was at this time that the institutions that would come to characterise twentieth century society were formed.

Sweden: Two Elites

The profound transformations of society that took place in the years leading up to 1920 have been called the double rupture. The first break was the severing of the traditional linkage between economic and political power. Instead of a single power elite Sweden would henceforth be ruled by two centres of power. The second break involved two new groups taking power, each in their own sphere. In the course of a few decades the mercantile and agricultural interests were replaced as the economically dominant class by a group of owners of major companies who were masters of modern technology, international enterprise, complicated financial transactions and the organisation of large companies. As a result of universal suffrage the political sphere was conquered by a mass labour movement which together with the other social movements formed the bedrock of the alliance that forced democracy through.

This makes it possible to refer to a double rupture in the historical process. Firstly, there was in historic terms the revolutionary dissolution of the formal connection between economic and political power – previously suffrage and eligibility had been dependent on economic status. Secondly, the development of two new elite groupings occurred simultaneously – each of which specialised in its own sphere of power. The economic elite concentrated on industrialisation, the political elite on the work of political reform.

The relationship between the two spheres of power was an uncertain one until the 1930s. A group of the major company owners were intent on waging an active struggle with the Social Democratic government and so achieving a shift of power. There were factions within the labour movement that wanted to turn their ideas on nationalisation and state control over industry into reality. And yet what resulted was a form of mutual consensus known as the historic compromise between labour and capital. Industry accepted that the labour movement would exploit political power to implement social reforms over the long term. The labour movement refrained from implementing its plans to attack the private ownership of industry. The Saltsjöbaden Agreement of 1938 would take on a symbolic importance. The common denominator for this spirit of compromise was confidence in rationalisation, growth and structural change.

Initially it was unclear how the power struggle would end. There were powerful forces on both sides that could not tolerate any sharing of power. Within the labour movement there were many who wanted to bring industry under political control by means of nationalisation. But none of these factions were to get their own way. Industry recognised that by dint of their majority the Social Democrats would be able to implement major welfare reforms. The labour movement for its part refrained from using its state power to nationalise industry. The two sides were united by their common interest in rational production, industrial regeneration and a competitive exporting industry.

Two Centralised Organisations

The power system that would come to be known as the Swedish Model both at home and abroad was developed in the 1950s. Wage agreements gave the peak associations, LO and SAF, a dominant position in the

labour market. The interest organisations gained political influence as a result of being consulted by the state. Informal meetings between the government and the major interest organisations at Harpsund, the country residence of the Prime Minister, lead to the coining of the term "Harpsund Democracy".

The first half of the 1970s saw consensus giving way to confrontation. LO changed its strategy. Instead of negotiations, compromises and agreements the trade union movement opted for implementing their objectives on the democratisation of working life through legislation. The Social Democratic Government implemented a series of labour law reforms. It was in the same spirit that the proposal was launched for the establishment of employee investment funds. The conflict over this proposal worsened relations between the trade union movement and the Social Democrats on the one side and the employers and the non-Socialist parties on the other.

What later became clear was that no return to the Swedish Model was possible. Decorporatisation at the beginning of the 1990s has further widened the gulf between the current system of decision-making and the close cooperation between the organisations and the state that had characterised Sweden for several decades. SAF is demanding revision of the labour laws of the 1970s which is being met by the outright opposition of LO and TCO. The role played by the peak associations is also shifting ground. Prime importance is moving away from the centre of LO and towards the individual trade unions. SAF is deserting the corporatist bodies and campaigning actively for the decentralisation of wage-formation down to the level of the local company.

A More Pluralist Social Structure

These changes should not only be seen against the background of the politics of power, they also reflect more fundamental social changes. The power structure dominated by labour and capital is a manifestation of the fundamental cleavage of industrial society. The changes currently taking place, however, will affect the very basis of this constellation of power. Today less than a third of the working population is employed in agriculture and industry. The industrial society of Sweden is being transformed into an internationalised information society.

The internationalisation of economic life means that the national arena loses importance. It is becoming less and less possible to compel industry to make negotiated settlements at the domestic level. Capital has become much more mobile. The internationalisation of the financial markets and the deregulation of the currency markets are seen as characteristic signs of the developments taking place. It is becoming increasingly unrealistic to refer to the power elite of a single country. This would continue to suggest that decisions vital to the future of the country are being made by a few elite groups at national level. The image of labour, capital and the state forming the dominant control structure has to be modified in at least one vital respect. Internationalisation is radically altering the entire notion of a power structure existing at the national level.

During the epoch of the industrial society politics was shaped by relatively simple cleavages. Without gross over-simplification the Swedish party system could be described as one-dimensional. What differences there have been on taxation, the size of the public sector and income redistribution policy have occurred for the most part along the left-right scale.

A key element of the changed character of politics is that fewer and fewer of the central issues can be fitted into the conceptual universe of the left-right dimension. The nuclear power question is an example of an issue in which conflicts of opinion were expressed contrary to the pattern of conflict currently established by the left-right dimension. The issues of the post-industrial society are increasingly creating new and unusual tensions both between and within the political parties. Electoral support for the political parties is becoming more volatile and new parties are being formed.

The alteration in the perception of the problems has not only resulted in the development of new patterns of interaction between those institutions already in existence, the new issues are also creating entirely new organisations. "The new social movements" is the term commonly used in the academic literature on the subject – a collective term for a multiplicity of interest groups, ranging from those movements with very broad programs to strictly single-issue groups.

A universal feature of the alteration of the power structure is quite simply that the number of parties and protagonists is rising. While the power structure of yesterday was made up of a few major organisations, the contemporary power structure is being formed by a large and rising

number of organisational groupings. A direct consequence is that the number of actors involved in conflicts has also risen as have the points of interaction.

The Altered Role of the State

It is therefore not only internationalisation and the process of European integration which are changing the status of the nation state. Other aspects of the transformation of society are also of major consequence for the state. There can no longer be any question of a continued expansion of the public sector. The number of public employees stabilised at a high level during the 1980s and has now begun to decline. Certain parts of the organisational structure of the state, which were considered to be central to the social organisation of the Swedish Model, are diminishing in importance. The system of committees and commissions of inquiry has been weakened. The role of the central administrative agencies is changing from a directly executive role to one of consultation and oversight. The changing status of the central state level needs to be seen against the background of two simultaneous processes – internationalisation and decentralisation. The power of the nation state is under threat from two different directions.

Decentralisation means that the emphasis in the activities of the public sector is being shifted to the regions, municipalities, neighbourhood councils and local authorities. In many cases, however, it remains unclear to what extent the decentralisation of responsibility – particularly in relation to vital economic decisions – is being accompanied by a transfer of real power.

What should, however, be beyond dispute is that national unity and cultural homogeneity are being weakened. Changes to the mass media system are of major significance in this regard. In the course of a few decades the mass media have established themselves as a power centre in their own right. International currents of opinion and the advent of new media are challenging the traditional dominance of the opinion formers.

In sum, changes to the Swedish power structure mean that the institutions that have been shaped by the epoch of the industrial society are now failing. New power centres have grown in importance without replacing the established institutions. The very appearance of the power structure has been altered in consequence. The number of independent

power centres is growing which is making the power structure more complex.

18 Citizenship

Becoming a Swedish Citizen

When a child is born it automatically becomes a Swedish citizen if its mother is a Swedish citizen or if its father is a Swedish citizen and married to the child's mother.

There are three further ways in which Swedish citizenship can be acquired: legitimation, registration and naturalisation. Three conditions have to be met in order to become naturalised. The main principle of the age requirement is that candidate citizens must be at least 18 years of age in order to be naturalised in their own right, ie without a parent simultaneously becoming a Swedish citizen. The residence requirement means that the candidate must have been resident in Sweden for at least five years, in the case of Nordic citizens the minimum period of residence is two years. The conduct requirement means that the candidate needs to have conducted himself well; repeated acts of serious criminality constitute a barrier to acquiring citizenship. In contrast with many European countries Sweden does not make language skills a requirement.

Obligations

Citizenship can be described as consisting of a set of obligations and rights. The obligations have not been set out systematically, but a

number of particular obligations which exist under Swedish law can be found in various pieces of legislation.

Compulsory school attendance means that the state compels children to undergo education for a minimum period of nine years. The national curriculum for the education of schoolchildren is decided by the state through the issue of regulations and timetables. The defence of the external security of the realm requires the participation of the citizenry and this obligation is embodied in compulsory military service, civil defence conscription and other forms of compulsory service. Every citizen is also obliged to assist the emergency services in the case of accidents. A court of law has the right to force witnesses to attend its proceedings. In addition there is the general obligation to obey the laws of the land and the decisions of the public authorities.

As far as is known there is no systematic study as to whether and in what respects the obligations of Swedish citizenship deviate from the general European norm. Compulsory school attendance is universal whereas in several other countries the defence of national security is based on a professional army which has been recruited voluntarily instead of according to the principle of compulsory military service. Some countries impose obligations on their citizens which do not exist in Sweden – such as compulsory voting.

The Rights of Citizens

Most of the rights enjoyed by the citizens of today can be dated to the period after the mid-nineteenth century. Civil rights have been primarily concerned with the gradual process of the emancipation of women in legal terms. Political rights relate above all to universal and equal suffrage in elections to the Riksdag and local government councils. Social rights affect schooling, working life, health care, social services, social insurance, family life and housing.

Nowadays the rights and freedoms of individuals are protected both by international conventions and by domestic legislation.

International Conventions

In 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Declaration of Human Rights. The General Assembly has also adopted conventions on the abolition of racial discrimination (1965); on civil and political rights (1966); on economic, social and cultural rights (1966); on the abolition of discrimination against women (1979); on torture and on other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (1984) and on the rights of the child (1989).

The Council of Europe adopted a convention on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms (1950). The European Convention on Human Rights has been subsequently extended by additional articles. In 1994 the Riksdag decided to incorporate the European Convention into Swedish law. The Council of Europe has also adopted a social statute (1961), a convention on the prohibition of torture and cruel or inhuman treatment or punishment (1987) – which is considerably more extensive in comparison with the the corresponding UN convention – and a convention on local self-government (1988).

A number of agreements have been ratified within the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which are not legally binding although they are, however, binding in political terms. These include the CSCE Final Act, also known as the Helsinki Agreement (1975), the Stockholm Document (1986), the Vienna Document (1990) and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990). The latter lays down fundamental principles on human rights, democracy and government under the rule of law. A number of international agreements lay down what are usually known as the rules of war. Sweden has approved or adopted these international conventions.

The Instrument of Government

Owing to a lack of agreement among the political parties the chapter on the rights and freedoms of the individual in the 1974 Instrument of Government ended up being something of a compromise – and was heavily criticised as inadequate. Two commissions of inquiry later and after two decisions of the Riksdag in the 1970s the list of rights and freedoms was extended and given greater protection.

Some of the rights and freedoms in the second chapter of the Instrument of Government aim to secure the legal rights of the individual,

others are designed to protect freedoms of opinion, while a third group safeguard social and cultural rights.

A number of these provisions are formulated in such a way that they cannot be restricted except by amending the constitution. Other rights and freedoms, although set out in the Instrument of Government, may be restricted by the normal legislative process. Nevertheless legislation to restrict rights must meet a number of specific requirements, as was pointed out in chapter 6.

The Instrument of Government expressly declares that in Sweden foreigners are always to be treated on an equal basis with Swedish citizens in matters relating to certain specified rights and freedoms. In relation to a number of other rights and freedoms, foreigners are to be treated on an equal basis with Swedish citizens unless otherwise specified in legislation.

Rights in Both Formal and Real Terms

It is very difficult to establish any clear-cut answer to the question of how far Swedish rights and freedoms have been realised *de facto* and not only *de jure*. The aim of several of the fundamental rights and freedoms is to guarantee the minimum requirements for the democratic state based on the rule of law. This ensures that under normal circumstances the minimum standards are taken for granted and need not be invoked.

However, there also exists a whole range of rights which may be described as rights of participation. The democratic form of government of the open society provides its citizens with the freedom to try by various ways and means to influence the taking of decisions that affect them as individuals or as groups. In the general discussion on the concept of democracy the question to what extent the highest possible level of political participation should be considered a positive value in itself remains controversial; there are those who maintain that the quality of democracy is mainly determined by other factors. Nevertheless there is broad agreement that too low a level of participation by the public constitutes a threat to democracy, in the long term at least.

The concept of democracy as generally understood means that political power is ultimately exercised by the people and that individual

citizens need to possess a certain measure of knowledge and skill in order to protect their interests. The lower the level of turnout is in general elections, the greater the uncertainty as to the representativeness of the elected assembly.

There are several methods of measuring the proportion of the population who are excluded from political life, who fail to make use of their rights to participate in the political process for a variety of reasons. The proportion of those not taking part in the general election of 1991 amounted to 13 per cent of the electorate. The corresponding proportion for the municipal elections was 16 per cent; the higher percentage can be explained almost exclusively with reference to the relatively low level of turnout among resident foreigners who are entitled to vote in municipal elections (though not in the general election). Elections to the church parish assemblies are a special feature of general elections as nine out of ten voters abstain from making use of their right to participate in elections to local church assemblies.

Based on interview surveys it is possible to make rough estimates for other aspects of political alienation. Some 6 per cent of adult Swedes consider themselves incapable of appealing against a decision by a public authority. The same survey also revealed that 16 per cent had never taken part in a political demonstration, never contacted a person in a position of authority in order to influence the development of a social issue, never addressed a public meeting, never written a letter to a newspaper or an article, nor were members of a trade union or a political party. The remaining 84 per cent had actively participated in at least one of these forms. An interview survey from 1987 showed that 6 per cent were not members of any voluntary association.

These data provide evidence of low rates of participation in particular areas; immigrants show low levels of electoral turnout and the vast majority of members of the Church of Sweden do not participate in local church elections. However, there are no other indications of widespread apathy. Although a particular group of citizens must be considered to be politically alienated, this group constitutes only a tiny minority as a proportion of the whole population.

Determining the number of politically passive citizens can be seen as establishing the lower threshold for political participation. The subsequent question relates to the scale of participation and the distribution above this minimum level. The degree of political involvement as measured by the number of memberships in various organisations, for

example, shows that the vast majority of Swedes are members of at least one organisation but there are only relatively few Swedes who are strongly committed. It is estimated that between 10 and 15 per cent of Swedes are members of a political party or a political association. Only a small percentage hold an elected position in any form of political organisation. Both those who are politically very active and those who are politically very passive constitute tiny minorities.

The great variation in levels of political participation is evidence of the significant differences that exist between various population groups. The highly educated and those with high incomes make more frequent use of their right to vote in elections to the Riksdag while the less educated and those on low pay participate in election at below average levels.

Variations in political involvement are of major relevance to the functioning of democracy. The problem of accessibility means that, although in formal terms there are no longer any barriers to the various centres of power, such barriers still exist in the real world. History has shown that there are four particular categories of people that have problems in asserting themselves in the decision-making processes of society: these are women, the socially disadvantaged, ethnic minorities and young people.

Women

Broadly speaking the struggle for power waged by Swedish women can be divided into two phases. Until 1920 the main demand was for formal equality, ie equality before the law. Legislation put women at a disadvantage in the spheres of the family, work and politics. A whole series of changes to legislation brought about improvements to the status of married women; they also provided women with access to civil service posts while the suffrage was extended to include them. Although additional improvements have since been made to the legal status of women in a number of respects, the primary concern of the women's movement during the rest of the twentieth century has increasingly shifted from the formal to the real barriers which exist to equal opportunities for women. For the most part these barriers have not been legal in nature but rather economic, social, ideological and political.

The social structure of the Swedish Model has been both to the advantage and to the detriment of the struggle of women for power. The general orientation of Swedish political culture towards equality and universalism has served to promote the participation of women in social affairs. But the Swedish social model has also been closely linked to labour and production. In practice this has meant that it has been the male industrial worker who has served as the prototype for the Swedish citizen. Only gradually and in the face of considerable inertia have the requirements of women been accorded priority on the political agenda.

Public Policy

In those articles of the Instrument of Government intended to establish the objectives of the polity it is stated that the government of the people is charged with securing the equal rights of men and women.

In 1980 a special law on equality of opportunity was passed; the Equal Opportunities Act was revised in 1991. Its aim is to promote equality of opportunity between men and women in relation to employment, working conditions and career development. The main statutes of the Act are restricted to working life. The Act consists of two parts, a prohibition of discrimination and the promotion of equality. The Act forbids employers to discriminate against employees on the basis of gender. Under the Act an employer is also obliged to seek actively to promote equality of opportunity in working life. A special public authority, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Act are implemented.

Family policy is also of major importance for the position of women. Financial support for families with children comes in the form of child benefit and the parental benefit set up as part of the parental insurance scheme which was introduced at the beginning of the 1970s. In this context mention should also be made of the contribution made by local and regional government to the provision of child care facilities such as nurseries and day-care centres.

In recent years public policy has also recognized the problem of violence against women. Legislation passed in 1988 aims to increase the protection available for women threatened with violence.

The Representation of Women

Despite the general orientation of public policy towards the promotion of equality of opportunity between men and women, there still remains a considerable gulf between the ideal and reality.

Most adult women work for a living nowadays. The labour market is, however, segregated to a considerable degree. It is predominantly women who do routine work and subordinate tasks while most leading positions are occupied by men. Among white collar staff in the private sector women make up 75 per cent of the lowest level employment category but only 9 per cent of the highest.

A corresponding pattern can be discerned if a comparison is made of the representation of women at various levels in the interest organisations. Women account for more than half of the members of LO but occupy only a tiny minority of the leading posts.

Although the proportion of women in elected political assemblies has tended to rise during recent decades, men are still in the majority. Women account for 51 per cent of eligible voters, and therefore of eligible candidates, and of those who actually cast their vote. Women are still underrepresented both among the candidates nominated by the political parties and among those actually elected. However, several parties are currently attempting to increase the representation of women by means such as the rule that every other candidate on the ballot should be a women. Since the 1994 election women account for 40 per cent of the members of the Riksdag.

A public enquiry into the representation of women found in the mid-1980s that women accounted for only 16 per cent of the ordinary members of the executive boards of public authorities at central and regional level. The inquiry proposed that the state should set itself the target of achieving equal representation of men and women on such boards by 1998 at the latest. According to the inquiry if all efforts fail to achieve this goal, then the Riksdag should pass a law making quotas for women mandatory.

Women and Politics

A number of the social changes currently taking place are having an impact on the efforts made by women to achieve political power.

The women's movement in the Nordic countries, and in Sweden in particular, has used mainly political channels to campaign for the implementation of its demands. The position of women has been improved by government measures "from on high"; Norwegian political scientist Helga Hernes has referred to the concept of state feminism. As has been demonstrated previously in this book, the role of the state is currently being altered by a number of factors such as internationalisation and the imposition of economic restraints. In what respects these changes will affect the political strategy of the women's movement remains an open question.

Potential membership of the European Union has caused unease among sections of the Swedish women's movement. Integration with other countries that have a smaller proportion of women in the labour force and poorer representation of women on various decision-making bodies is considered likely to be a backward step. However, according to the view of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, the EU has been pursuing an active equal opportunities policy for several years. In various directives the EU has affirmed the principles of equal pay, equal treatment and equality of opportunity in social insurance matters. In a number of cases brought before the European Court, its verdict has supported the commitment to equality of opportunity. In recent years the EU has increasingly emphasised various forms of active measures aimed in particular at raising the level of women in the labour force.

The Swedish women's movement is also facing a choice as to what form of organisation it should adopt. Hitherto a vital part of its work to achieve equality has been undertaken through its representation on official bodies and in the established organisations and political parties. The issue is whether the tasks facing the movement today demand new forms of operation.

The Less Educated and the Low Paid

In all known societies power has been strongly associated with economic resources. In Sweden, too, study after study has been able to provide documentary evidence that the low paid, those with less education and workers in general show lower rates of participation, have less

political self-confidence and less power than the highly educated and those on high incomes.

But the connection between social situation and power is not uniform across all societies and all situations. Social differences and their effects on political participation may be changed to some extent by political decisions.

The link between resources and power may be altered by two means. One way involves attempts to diminish differences in terms of the distribution of resources. An extreme equal opportunities policy would have the aim of providing all citizens with exactly the same income and the same level of education. It is here that the central dilemma of the democratic ideal presents itself. It is true that democracy contains a strong measure of equality, but the principle of self-determination and the right to be different are also fundamental to its ideals. Combining equality and pluralism is one of the major problems facing democracy. There is, however, an alternative, or rather supplementary, method of altering the connection between resources and power. In practice resources may have greater or smaller effects on the capacity of the individual to exert influence. One example was the differentiated form of franchise that existed for the municipal elections of former times. The number of votes an elector was entitled to depended on his income and wealth. This link disappeared with the introduction of equal suffrage. Although the economic differences remained unchanged, their political consequences were abolished. Everyone received a single vote irrespective of their financial status.

By comparison with other developed industrial countries the differences in income in Sweden are relatively small. In most other comparable countries the gap between rich and poor is considerably greater. Interview surveys have shown that there are also clear differences in terms of attitude. Equality is a considerably more central element of the political culture in Sweden than in most other countries.

Are economic differences growing or diminishing in Sweden? Economists and sociologists have used various techniques of measurement to try and find an answer to the question of the change in the distribution of income. The general trend in recent years has been for the differences to diminish rather than grow. A certain reservation should be made, however, in relation to measurements carried out in the most recent period as there are some indications that income differences have started to widen slightly.

The more general question as to whether the changes that have been taking place mean that citizens are better or worse off can obviously not be answered simply by reference to studies of the distribution of incomes. Sociologists and statisticians have made enormous efforts to find alternative means of measurement for the distribution and development of welfare. What a study of living standards carried out by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Stockholm has made clear above all is that the proportion of the population which can be considered to have welfare problems depends to a considerable extent on the definition selected. The survey has been set up so that it is also possible to draw conclusions on developments over time. Although developments between 1981 and 1991 were not clear-cut, in most respects the welfare problems had diminished. Material standards had improved. The indicators pointing to an increase in problems were generally related to psycho-social factors. An increasing proportion of citizens reported that they experienced severe problems during their upbringing, that they have stressful jobs, and that they have been the victims of crime.

There is clear evidence that differences in relation to income, education and occupational status have major effects on the level of participation in social affairs. The individual assessment of personal capacity to appeal against the decisions of public authorities, may, as has previously been pointed out, be seen as exemplifying citizen efficacy. Interview surveys have made clear that there are considerable differences between different population groups in this regard. Only half of the less educated considered themselves capable of appealing a decision of a public authority whereas this capability is considerably more prevalent among the better educated.

Where it is possible to compare the results of various interview surveys over time, the general picture that emerges is one in which the effects of educational and income factors on political participation have neither increased nor decreased during the most recent decades. This means that the differences between the highly educated and the less educated, for example, remain much the same.

Immigrants and Minorities

It is customary to distinguish between the concepts of nation and state. A nation is a community of people bound together by linguistic, cultural and historical ties. A state is formed by those who belong to a territorially-based institution. The principle of the nation state, in the sense of a total identity of nation and state, has hardly ever become reality anywhere. Seen in terms of population, Sweden may still be a relatively homogeneous country but it is increasingly inappropriate to equate Sweden (in the sense of the state) with the Swedes (meaning the predominant ethnic group). Sweden has always had an ethnic minority – the Sami (previously known as the Lapps) – within its borders. Another linguistic minority are the Finns of Tornedal. In the course of the centuries the minority problem has also appeared in the form of religious groups who have professed a different doctrine than that of the dominant group. Today the focus of the problem of minorities is on the growth in the number of immigrants.

The Sami People

People who have Sami as a mother tongue and/or see themselves as Sami are usually defined as Sami. The number of Sami in the world has been estimated at between 45,000–65,000, of whom between 15,000–20,000 live in Sweden. The traditional areas of settlement of the Sami are in the northern parts of Norway, Finland and Sweden and the neighbouring areas across the Russian border. The Sami are one of the aboriginal peoples of the Nordic area.

Traditional Sami society was set up as an association of families who moved herds of reindeer across the land in accordance with the changing seasons. The Sami have never had any state of their own in the accepted sense of the term. From the sixteenth century onwards the colonisation of the northern provinces of Scandinavia meant that the Sami were suppressed. The right of the Sami to life and to earn their living was, however, recognized in the codicil added to the Border Treaty of 1751 between Sweden and Norway.

Under Swedish legislation the rights given to the Sami are accorded primarily to the reindeer-herding population, who are supposed to form local associations (*samebyar*) according to the law. The members of

these associations constitute only a minority of the Sami. For many years the aim of official policy was to integrate the Sami into Swedish society. The Sami language has therefore long been accorded low status.

The Sami see themselves as a separate people and they collaborate with indigenous peoples in other parts of the world and with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. Unlike Norway, however, Sweden has decided not to ratify the convention on indigenous peoples adopted by the International Labour Organisation. The reason being that the convention would give the Sami greater land rights than a majority of the Riksdag found acceptable.

The Sami minority have long demanded greater self-determination. These demands have been met, in part at least, by the establishment of the *Sameting*, the Swedish Sami Parliament, which is a public authority with a mainly consultative role; its responsibilities include issues that affect Sami culture and language. The basic provisions are formulated in the Sameting Act, which came into force in 1993.

The Sameting consists of 31 members appointed by election. Anyone who can satisfy the legal definition of a Sami (as defined in the Act) is entitled to vote. Elections to the Sameting are held every four years on the third Sunday in May, with the first election being held in May 1993.

In contrast to local government authorities such as the municipal council and the county council, the Sameting is a public authority and therefore subordinate to the Government. The Government appoints the president of the Sameting on the advice of the Sameting. The Sameting appoints an executive council of a maximum of seven members from among its members.

The advent of the Sameting means that the Sami have an elected body of their own which represents them as an ethnic group. It is, however, a public authority and its role is largely consultative. The Sami themselves consider that it fails to meet their demands for political power.

Immigrants

Sweden has been transformed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. From the latter half of the nineteenth century until the 1930s there were more people emigrating from Sweden than immigrating into Sweden. Most emigrants went to America. Since the Second World War, Sweden has been a country with net immigration. Until the

beginning of the 1970s this was mainly in the form of immigrant labour. Swedish companies and public authorities encouraged immigration to meet the need for labour in industry and the public sector in a period of considerable economic growth. A significant proportion of this immigration was from the other Nordic countries; migration of this kind was made easier by the 1954 treaty setting up a common Nordic labour market. At the beginning of the 1980s immigration changed character. It was then that immigration increased from outside the Nordic area and from outside Europe in particular. The majority of people trying to enter Sweden nowadays are refugees or the dependants of people already resident in Sweden.

There can be no straightforward measurement of the number of immigrants in Sweden, since there are so many possible definitions of immigrant. Immigrants are said to make up anything from 5 to 16 per cent of the population. Of the resident population of Sweden just under 5 per cent are aliens born abroad. A similar proportion were born abroad but have become Swedish citizens. These two groups combine to form a group of between 9 and 10 per cent of the population usually known as first generation immigrants. A further percentage point is made up of foreign citizens who were born in Sweden. This would mean that in total the proportion of immigrants would be somewhere between 10 and 11 per cent. If second generation immigrants who are Swedish citizens and were born in Sweden and who have at least one parent born abroad are added to the definition, then the upper figure for the proportion of immigrants in Sweden reaches some 16 per cent.

Since 1976 foreign citizens, who have been officially resident in the country over the last three years, are entitled to vote in municipal and county council elections. The idea behind this reform was that the widening of the suffrage would be to the benefit of both immigrants and society as a whole.

There have also been calls to give immigrants the right to vote in elections to the Riksdag. At the beginning of the 1980s a commission of inquiry proposed that citizens of the other Nordic countries should be given the right to vote in elections to the Swedish Riksdag on condition they had been resident in Sweden for at least three years. This proposal has not been adopted. A counter-argument was that the right to vote is linked to citizenship and that under the proposal the groups in question would be able to vote in the elections to the parliaments of two countries – which would give them a dual franchise.

The turnout of immigrants in local elections has fallen, from 60 per cent in 1976 to 41 per cent in 1991. Several explanations have been advanced for the relatively low levels of electoral participation by immigrants. Social differences may be one of the causes as there are relatively high proportions of less educated people and the low paid among immigrants. There is also the technical factor that the electoral rolls contain individuals who are no longer in the country when the elections take place. The fact that immigrants have no right to vote for the Riksdag may also diminish interest in the local elections.

Immigrants are disadvantaged in the same way that women are in relation to recruitment to decision-making political positions. While foreign citizens made up just over 4 per cent of the electorate in 1991, they accounted for only 1.2 per cent of the names on the ballot and no more than 0.6 per cent of those who were actually elected to local government councils.

Interview surveys show that immigrants also have lower rates of activity in relation to other political forms of participation than voting. Immigrants are underrepresented in the political life of Sweden.

Young and Old

Power has never been equally distributed across the generations. Just as the balance of power between the young, the middle aged and the elderly has shifted between different societies and eras, so the public debate has encompassed a variety of ideas as to the appropriate balance of power between the generations. To the extent that both new blood and experience are considered to be positive qualities, both youth and old age can lay claim to power.

Historical statistics show that concepts such as young and old are extremely relative. The distinguishing feature of the age profile of the late twentieth century is that an ever greater proportion of the population is reaching an advanced age. In 1990 thirteen per cent of the Swedish population was 70 or older.

For the elections in 1970 the voting age was lowered from 21 to 20; the right to vote was extended to those people whose twentieth birthday fell in the year of the election. At the election of 1976 the voting age was

lowered to 18. The rule still in force means that citizens gain the right to vote on reaching their eighteenth birthday.

Changes to the voting age coincided with the lowering of the age of majority. The argument behind the decision to expand the electorate was motivated by the fact that social changes meant that young people had gained greater insight into social, political and economic issues. The hope was that the lowering of the voting age would focus the interest young people have for social issues into political activity within the framework of representative democracy.

Turnout in elections is highest among middle-aged people and lowest among both the youngest and the oldest members of the enfranchised population. The same picture emerges, with even greater clarity, if the age composition of the power elite is analysed. The powerful are generally middle-aged; the very highest positions in society are usually held by individuals between the ages of 40–65.

In politics these generational differences involve two problems. One of the problems relates to the representation of older people. Demographic changes mean that a growing percentage of the population will be made up of pensioners most of whom live an active social life. Formal and informal rules mean, however, that individuals leave the decision-making positions at roughly the same time that they leave their working life behind them. As a result pensioners are underrepresented and there is a growing gulf between a major group of citizens and the political decision-making bodies.

The second problem relates to the political participation of the young. Young people are massively underrepresented in parliament and on local and county councils. The data on electoral turnout indicates that young people are more passive politically than the average citizen. But this picture remains incomplete. Several studies have provided evidence that in general terms young people are not less engaged by political and social issues. It is, however, a fact that young people tend to choose different forms of expression than traditional political activity. The fact that young people are underrepresented in the power centres of society may not be as much of a problem for young people as it is for the established institutions. The considerable barriers that serve to obstruct access to young people mean that many institutions miss out on a powerful force for regeneration.

19 Lessons for the Future

When painting an overall picture of the current state of Swedish democracy it is necessary to use both light and dark shades. There are a number of indisputably positive features. Seen in global terms Sweden stands out as a haven of wellbeing where political conflicts can be solved using peaceful and orderly means. If, however, the perspective is restricted to the political systems of Western Europe, then the assessment has to be more mixed. Sweden certainly does have a large number of social and organisational solutions to offer as part of its contribution to the European debate, but it also has much to learn from the experiences of other democracies. If the ideal of the pluralistic democracy is taken as the basis for a critical assessment of Sweden, then it becomes evident that there are shortcomings to be found in every area.

The Riksdag has lost part of its control over the state finances. The power of scrutiny of the Riksdag is becoming ever more important but the Riksdag has not yet been able to invent satisfactory methods to carry out this responsibility.

As a consequence of the instability of minority parliamentary government the Cabinet finds it very difficult to fulfil its obligations as the executive agency of the nation. The government ministries are faced with the still unresolved problem of developing new ways of working as an effective management structure in an internationalised and rapidly changing world.

The central administrative agencies are also finding it difficult to develop forms of operation that meet the requirements of quality and flexibility. The information systems and techniques of oversight and

evaluation of the public administration seem inadequate when the requirements of tomorrow are taken into consideration.

Given the greater importance accorded the implementation of legislation as a result of Europeanisation and the increasing emphasis on human rights, the courts are being given an even more crucial role to play in society. An issue currently facing Swedes once more is the inherent dilemma of democracy caught between majority rule and constitutional restrictions.

Local government authorities suffer today from the lack of a clear demarcation of responsibility between central, regional and local government. Experimentation with changes to internal forms of organisation has revealed uncertainty about the scope and content of the role of the politician.

Although electoral participation is still high, the political parties are under threat from a weakening of party loyalty and growing distrust among voters as well as considerable problems of recruitment.

Many established interest organisations are facing major problems of adjustment. There are serious shortcomings in terms of the ability of the membership to influence the leadership of the organisations.

In many parts of the country a lack of competition and variety characterise the mass media. Although in many respects the accentuating and simplifying techniques of journalistic practice have been a success, their limitations have also been clearly shown when it comes to conducting a more informed social debate.

The concentration of power in industry is in direct conflict with several of the fundamental principles of pluralism. Restrictions on competitiveness and the existence of monopolies and oligopolies mean that the market system reveals considerable shortcomings in major sections of Swedish industry.

The fact that the head of state is appointed according to the principle of inheritance constitutes a major departure from the democratic principles of recruitment.

The establishment of the Church of Sweden is problematic from the point of view of freedom of worship.

Economic Decline

However, the single most acute problem that faces Swedish democracy is the deteriorating economic situation. Even were an international boom to ameliorate the most urgent problems, the Swedish economy would still be facing severe structural difficulties. One of these is the enormous deficit in the state finances and the consequent rise in the national debt. This is what precludes any possibility of dealing with the problems of the economic cycle as they were dealt with in previous decades – by expanding the public sector. Until the beginning of the 1990s Sweden had been able to avoid the massive unemployment that has become a permanent feature of most European countries. Current prognoses indicate that Sweden too will have at least ten per cent unemployment in the foreseeable future. It remains uncertain how the advent of a large group of long-term unemployed citizens will change Swedish society. The experience of other countries makes clear that unemployment can give rise to despair as well as providing the breeding ground for anti-democratic movements.

The future of democratic government is very much dependent on the capacity of the political system to overcome unemployment and economic stagnation. Economic problems require an enormous commitment of political energy and make political decisions even more dependent on popular legitimacy. As a result Swedish democracy is confronting what is probably the greatest challenge it has had to face throughout its seventy year history.

A New Form of Social Contract

For the three decades following the end of the Second World War Sweden had a social system which must be considered a success in many respects. The economy of the Swedish Model combined positive economic growth with both a rising level and an increasingly egalitarian distribution of material welfare. However, the model also led to the development of institutions and structures which were to act as barriers to continued economic progress.

The group of experts who were commissioned to analyse Sweden's future after the currency crisis of autumn 1992 found that the crisis of the Swedish Model was largely a crisis of institutions. A certain course

of action may appear favourable to individual agents and sub-systems while the outcome for the system as a whole may prove to be a negative one if the proper coordination mechanisms are lacking. The large number of special interests that are favoured by the current system appear to be strongly conservative

The Swedish Model may be seen as a form of social contract. With a great many changes occurring simultaneously vital elements of this social contract have now been terminated. The established models for organisation and management have proved ineffective. The crisis of political leadership is matched by a crisis of legitimacy. The dissatisfaction of the public and their impatience are becoming increasingly apparent.

The economic crisis has demonstrated that Sweden is suffering from an acute need for institutional changes. The question is not whether these changes will occur, but how and when. It will be a measure of the vitality of Swedish democracy if it manages to develop a new and functioning social contract. What is required in order to achieve this is a combination of political leadership and public support.

Appendix I Elections to the Riksdag 1911–1994

Election year	V	S	C	Fp	M	KdS	MP	NyD	Turn-out
1911	–	28.5	–	40.2	31.2	–	–	–	57.0
1914 spring	–	30.1	–	32.2	37.7	–	–	–	69.9
1914 autumn	–	36.4	0.2	26.9	36.5	–	–	–	66.2
1917	–	39.2	8.5	27.6	24.7	–	–	–	65.8
1920	–	36.1	14.2	21.8	27.9	–	–	–	55.3
1921	4.6	39.4	11.1	19.1	25.8	–	–	–	54.2
1924	5.1	41.1	10.8	16.9	26.1	–	–	–	53.0
1928	6.4	37.0	11.2	15.9	29.4	–	–	–	67.4
1932	8.3	41.7	14.1	11.7	23.5	–	–	–	68.6
1936	7.7	45.9	14.3	12.9	17.6	–	–	–	74.5
1940	4.2	53.8	12.0	12.0	18.0	–	–	–	70.3
1944	10.3	46.7	13.6	12.9	15.9	–	–	–	71.9
1948	6.3	46.1	12.4	22.8	12.3	–	–	–	82.7
1952	4.3	46.1	10.7	24.4	14.4	–	–	–	79.1
1956	5.0	44.6	9.4	23.8	17.1	–	–	–	79.8
1958	3.4	46.2	12.7	18.2	19.5	–	–	–	77.4
1960	4.5	47.8	13.6	17.5	16.5	–	–	–	85.9
1964	5.2	47.3	13.2	17.0	13.7	1.8	–	–	83.9
1968	3.0	50.1	15.7	14.3	12.9	1.5	–	–	89.3
1970	4.8	45.3	19.9	16.2	11.5	1.8	–	–	88.3
1973	5.3	43.6	25.1	9.4	14.3	1.8	–	–	90.8
1976	4.8	42.7	24.1	11.1	15.6	1.4	–	–	91.8
1979	5.6	43.2	18.1	10.6	20.3	1.4	–	–	90.7
1982	5.6	45.6	15.5	5.9	23.6	1.9	1.7	–	91.4
1985	5.4	44.7	9.8	14.2	21.3	2.6	1.5	–	89.9
1988	5.8	43.2	11.3	12.2	18.3	2.9	5.5	–	86.0
1991	4.5	37.7	8.5	9.1	21.9	7.1	3.4	6.7	86.7
1994	6.2	45.3	7.7	7.2	22.4	4.1	5.0	1.2	86.8

V: Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet* – former Communists)

S: Social Democrats (*Socialdemokraterna*)

C: Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*)

Fp: Liberals (*Folkpartiet liberalerna*)

M: Moderates (*Moderata samlingspartiet*)

KdS: Christian Democrats (*Kristdemokratiska samhällspartiet*)

MP: Green Party (*Miljöpartiet de gröna*)

NyD: New Democracy (*Ny demokrati*)

Data for 1911–1968 refers to elections to the Lower House.

Other parties are not included in this table. Percentages given are for valid votes cast.

Turnout as a percentage of the total electorate.

Source: Statistics Sweden. *General Elections*.

Appendix 2 Allocation of Seats in the Riksdag

Election year	V	S	C	Fp	M	KdS	MP	NyD	Total
1970	17	163	71	58	41	–	–	–	350
1973	19	156	90	34	51	–	–	–	350
1976	17	152	86	39	55	–	–	–	349
1979	20	154	64	38	73	–	–	–	349
1982	20	166	56	21	86	–	–	–	349
1985	19	159	44	51	76	–	–	–	349
1988	21	156	42	44	66	–	20	–	349
1991	16	138	31	33	80	26	–	25	349
1994	22	161	27	26	80	15	18	–	349

Initials of parties as in Appendix 1

Appendix 3 Swedish Governments since 1917

Accession	Prime Minister	Party Composition
October 1917	Nils Edén	Liberal/Social Democrat
March 1920	Hjalmar Branting	Social Democrat
October 1920	Louis De Geer/Oscar von Sydow	Caretaker
October 1921	Hjalmar Branting	Social Democrat
April 1923	Ernst Trygger	Conservative
October 1924	Hjalmar Branting/Rickard Sandler	Social Democrat
June 1926	C.G. Ekman	Liberal
October 1928	Arvid Lindman	Conservative
June 1930	C.G. Ekman/Felix Hamrin	Liberal
September 1932	Per Albin Hansson	Social Democrat
June 1936	Axel Pehrsson i Bramstorp	Agrarian League
September 1936	Per Albin Hansson	Social Democrat/Agrarian League
December 1939	Per Albin Hansson	National Coalition
July 1945	Per Albin Hansson/Tage Erlander	Social Democrat
October 1951	Tage Erlander	Social Democrat/Agrarian League
October 1957	Tage Erlander/Olof Palme	Social Democrat
October 1976	Thorbjörn Fälldin	Centre/Moderate/Liberal
October 1978	Ola Ullsten	Liberal
October 1979	Thorbjörn Fälldin	Moderate/Centre/Liberal
May 1981	Thorbjörn Fälldin	Centre/Liberal
October 1982	Olof Palme/Ingvar Carlsson	Social Democrat
October 1991	Carl Bildt	Moderate/Centre/Liberal/ Christian Democrat
October 1994	Ingvar Carlsson	Social Democrat

Appendix 4 Popular Referenda

	Percentage
1922 Prohibition of Alcohol	
Yes	49.0
No	51.0
<i>Turnout</i>	55.1
1955 Driving on the Right	
Yes	15.5
No	82.9
<i>Turnout</i>	53.2
1957 Supplementary Pension	
Scheme	
Line 1	45.8
Line 2	15.0
Line 3	35.3
Blank ballots	3.9
<i>Turnout</i>	72.4
1980 Nuclear Power	
Line 1	18.9
Line 2	39.1
Line 3	38.7
Blank ballots	3.3
<i>Turnout</i>	75.6
1994 Membership in the European Union	
Yes	
No	
Blank ballots	
<i>Turnout</i>	

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For a full list of references, including works in Swedish, see *Svensk politik*. The author and the translator wish to acknowledge the influence of the translation into English of the Constitution of Sweden published by the Swedish Riksdag in preparing this text.

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Olof Petersson

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